

Globalization and lifelong education: reflection on some challenges for Africa

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The global phenomenon called globalization frequently offers justifications for socio-economic and political actions aimed at bringing rapidly into fruition the 'Global Village' which Marshall McLuhan had anticipated decades ago. Both the 1972 UNESCO sponsored Commission Report chaired by Edgar Faure and that of 1996 chaired by Jacques Delors produced important documents which, as at other times, reviewed issues and priorities in education world wide, in spite of the obvious extreme diversity in socio-economic, political and educational situations, conceptions and structures. As always, UNESCO had been concerned about the numerous and vibrant challenges the future holds in store for everyone. In doing so, lifelong education has been identified as one of the indispensable assets available to us in the pursuits which regularly bring into the fore the concern for equality, equity and, indeed, human reasonableness. As the world pursues the ideals and objectives of globalization, the need arises for a timely reassessment of positions especially in the context of consequences and challenges that are inherent. This paper seeks to examine globalization in the context of some of the major challenges it poses for Africa. In particular, it proposes how lifelong education might be structured to assist Africans in comprehending evaluating and possibly, participating comparatively effectively in the relations implied in globalization rather than standing aloof and becoming hapless objects.

Introduction

The main thesis of this paper is that in spite of the current outcry against some of the unintended consequences of globalization as depicted by Campbell (1993: 7), Korten (1995: 6–14) and Beveridge (1996: 68) the phenomenon is seemingly inevitable and raises some challenges for the implementation of lifelong education legislation and policies in Africa. In fact, the so-called dangers inherent in the unequal distribution of capital between the First and Third Worlds which Frank (1981: 1–18) had attributed to globalization some 17 years ago and which seemed to inform the basis of the arguments by critics of the phenomenon today, cannot easily be wished away by the peoples and leaders of Africa. If anything, Africa must do well to comprehend and embrace the challenges induced by globalization in order to compete quite competently in a rapidly changing world.

On the basis of this conviction, the focus and argument in this paper would be that globalization as principle and practice has become a reality and, indeed, a driving socio-economic, cultural and political force, which we cannot afford to ignore. Indeed, it is

being argued that the relevance of Africa as a continent to be reckoned with in this millennium would depend significantly on how much its peoples have become subjects and not hapless objects of globalization.

To achieve the goals intended in this paper an attempt has been made to examine briefly the contextual differences and commonalities that exist among African nations. Secondly, it is realized that there is need to conceptualize globalization and lifelong education. Thirdly, the basic assumptions of globalization and some of its manifestations in Africa are examined. Finally, suggestions are made as to how lifelong education might be structured to be of use in helping Africa to compete favourably in the relations implied in globalization.

One obvious difficulty in articulating the debates on globalization manifests in its divergent connotations. For example, the application of globalization to the economy and its merits tends to be easily blurred by criticisms of social globalization. Yet, we know that the effects of economic globalization have been somewhat overwhelmingly positive. As Sutherland (1998: 1) noted, economic globalization has led to unprecedented liberalization of international trade, inducing increased productivity and efficiency and creating millions of jobs. Economic globalization has also induced a significant increase in international investment. Consequently, in the 1990s alone, foreign investors are known to have invested US\$1 trillion in developing economies, leading to improved living standards in some countries much faster than many people would have thought possible (Sutherland 1998: 1). This may be a welcome development.

Even at that, there are those who contend, advancing convincing reasons as they do, that economic globalization has actually impoverished the South ever more than before (Bhola 1998: 488, Brock *et al.* 1996: 4–5, Deutscher *et al.* 1996: 2–8, Holtz 1995: 7). Such positions should naturally question an attempt like this one which proposes that lifelong education needs to be really relevant in striving to equip Africans for effective competition in the global economy. In fact, Bhola (1998: 502) has been concerned that to globalize lifelong education would become lifelong bondage to the free market whilst the gap between the already unequal rewards in the market place would grow wider and wider.

These are wrong significant fears and suspicions being expressed by several scholars. They see in globalization a kind of socio-economic and political 'monster' that is capable of traumatizing nations that cannot or are unable to compete on equal terms.

The fears already expressed about globalization may not be unfounded; but the reality of our situation is that in the present circumstances it may be difficult for anyone to undermine the vigorous presence of the phenomenon. Worst still, no one can really halt globalization by preferring to pretend that the phenomenon need not exist. The fears being expressed about globalization, especially in Africa, have found roots in the unimpressive performance of our economic, social and political indices of development.

The rising advantages of economic globalization have not been unfortunately profound in Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa. Many of the Sub-Saharan African nations have recorded disappointing economic performance. This fact is reflected in their failure to integrate into the world economy and thus, to trade successfully and attract investment (Sutherland 1998: 1). In such situations as those in which many African nations have found themselves, it is necessary to examine and comprehend the phenomenon called globalization with a view to articulating how Africa's educational structures can be modified to be of much more relevance in the competition both in the long and short terms.

It is true that nations, including those in Africa are not equal as far as globalization is concerned. Nevertheless, the whole essence of development is to move away from one stage of development to a better one and globalization appears to be one of such shifts.

One fact we cannot run away from is that no nation, advantaged or disadvantaged from any perspective, can possibly ask the other not to develop. Within continents, there is always room for competition. Indeed, the emergence of complex and advanced manufacturing technology typified by the use of computer numerically controlled (CNC) machine tools, flexible manufacturing systems (FMS) and robot systems has meant that there must be a need for maintenance staff with higher level skills in many instances (Clarke 1996: 66–67). It would seem that every nation has had to wake up to these new realities of competition.

If Africa must move away from the periphery of influence and begin to cope with the realities of the present situations, the need arises for us not only to comprehend fully the phenomenon called globalization but to commence examining the challenges it poses to the people with a view to developing strategies which might better arm them for competition in the comity of nations. We must not fail to take urgent steps in identifying and developing as many strident strategies as could provide us side-bets. In the context of this discussion, lifelong education has been singled out for consideration as one of such strategies. But we cannot possibly reflect effectively on how lifelong education should help Africa in dealing with the challenges posed by globalization without first of all examining some of the basic differences and commonalities that exist among African nations since this should help to contextualize our discussion.

Differences and commonalities

The comprehension of how phenomenon affect Africa and the proposition of possible solutions for obviation obviously negative ones are frequently compounded by the existence of multiple histories, traditions, realities, approaches and practices. These would influence considerably how African nations respond to different phenomena, including globalizing processes. But this does not rule out the fact that there are at the same time very many significant commonalities, which may permit describing Africa's problems and solutions in some homogenizing way with allowance for specificity.

Africa has had contacts with peoples from almost every other continent. Historically, the colonization of Africa and whatever so-called gains, losses and problems arising therefrom have been ascribed largely to Britain, France and Portugal. Today, the continent has been 'polarized' along three major language blocs, namely anglophone, francophone and lusophone Africa. But much more than this superficial language 'divide', the socio-economic and political impacts of colonization have been noticeable in the way Africa nations respond to phenomena and, indeed, their comprehension and state of preparedness to reject, modify and adapt same. It might not be possible within the limits of our discussion to explore, in a profound way, the intricate manifestations of the responses.

Whatever differences that might appear to hinder describing and discussing Africa in a homogenizing way seem to be reduced significantly by what we might term as the commonalities. Indeed, in its 1995 report on the state of education in Africa, UNESCO's regional office in Dakar pinpointed some of the major commonalities (UNESCO 1995: 1–8). We can only attempt to highlight just a few of these commonalities.

Africa's harsh geographic and climatic conditions appear to be common. For many

countries within the equatorial region, there are violent rainstorms and high humidity. For others striding the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn there are records of extreme periods of heat and cold. Countries bordering the deserts frequently experience draughts, and these are just a few of the simplistic descriptions.

By far the most obvious commonalities in the context of this discussion are overdependence. Many African nations have continued to remain overdependent on their former colonizers for many things. And this has permeated socio-economic and political matters. For instance, African economics depend largely on a limited range of export products. In 1990, for example, Nigeria depended by almost 90% on the exports of crude oil just as cotton accounted for 50% of the exports in Chad, coffee for 75% of the exports in Burundi, oil for 80% of the exports in Gabon and the Congo, and bauxite for 86% of the exports by Guinea.

Rapidly growing population, illiteracy, diseases, high mortality rates and political instability are some of the major commonalities for many African nations. We cannot explore all of these, but Africa's external debts and the industrialized countries preference for protectionism has contributed to the marginalization of Africa. And the process of marginalization will continue if Africa is not alert enough to understand what is happening and its people equipped to compete effectively.

It is perhaps true that Africa's debt burden is the heaviest in the world. In 1991, the external indebtedness for sub-Saharan Africa was 110% of the GNP and comparatively 58% for the Middle East and North Africa, 41% for South America and the Caribbean and 34% for South Asia (UNICEF 1994). The prices of raw materials, the mainstream of most African economies, have been unstable with consequences for growing rates of prostitution, unemployment, crime and poverty. Furthermore, World Bank reports that since 1988, Sub-Saharan Africa has been involved in the long negative flow of capital in the form of payment of the principal and of interest on debt, to the tune of US\$0.7 billion in 1988, \$3.5 billion in 1992 and an estimated \$2.1 billion in 1993 (World Bank 1994). The point being made here is that whatever heterogeneity Africa nations seem to have are homogenized significantly by the commonalities, some of which have been cited in the context of the present discussion. These commonalities certainly compel some unity of purpose or practice on the continent. Contrary to the impressions anyone might hold, African nation-states are more united in the crusade against poverty, illiteracy, diseases and bliss. Semblance's of the uniting efforts are clear in the emergence of economic and political blocs like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the umbrella body known as the Organization of African Unity (OAU). But the application of the ideas implied here can be made meaningful only by detailed conceptual clarification of the major concepts in focus.

Lifelong education

Lifelong education as a concept is very old and almost ageless. Part of its early expositions are located in the philosophical views of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. For these ancient philosophers could be credited with pioneering in their individual discourses of intellectual development the view of the importance of the application of the human mind throughout lifespan. And Plato and Aristotle, in particular, advanced metaphysical arguments to back up their ways of thought and to lend credence to their practical initiation of sequences of studies aimed at developing the powers of reasoning.

Since the times of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, scholars have continued to refine the concept of lifelong education. Thus far, strong views continue to be proposed which are asking for the structural modification of the education system such that we make learning societies into realities. Gass (1996) describes the main features of such learning societies to include continuous investment in people; overcoming the fragmentation of life into education, work and retirement; forging new routes to equal opportunities; diversifying education and training opportunities; reconciling cultural, social, and economic goals; building on past achievements; and devising a new 'systemic' logic.

There are such other features as the strategic movements toward bringing about a more flexible 'architecture' or structure of learning institutions and opportunities wherein the processes of education are learner-centred and learner driven. Lifelong education has induced modifications to institutional frameworks such that people can learn in a relevant manner throughout life. It has prescribed as well the need for new pathways from school to work while deliberately developing and renewing adult person's intellect via continuing education. In all, lifelong education is being better comprehended and strongly accepted as the fulcrum around which education systems ought to be built.

The meanings ascribed to lifelong education are many, each of which is seemingly right in its own environment. In spite of these variations, lifelong education has its social, political, economic, personal and educational dimensions. Whichever dimension is emphasized and adopted depends on the individual who is free to make a choice.

The diversities of meaning ascribed to lifelong education notwithstanding, it is the view of this author that it is useful to accept the recommendation by Longworth and Keith Davies (1996: 21–37) to the effect that Elli's words provide a working definition of lifelong learning which fits aptly to lifelong education:

Lifelong learning (education, *sic*) is the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes, and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances, and environments.

In the conceptualization highlighted above, there is obvious reference to the elements of human potential which needs to be regularly explored by ensuring that education systems offer a variety of organized and systematic opportunities for learning throughout life. And this is what rightly advocates lifelong education and draws attention to it, in demanding for the horizontal and vertical integration of education such that in-school education is integrated with other components of society promoting learning, for example, the public libraries, archives, museums, the media and so on. In its vertical integration, education can be structured so that learning events at various age levels become really interactive and complementary. Even though we cannot go to more lengths within the limits allowed in this discussion, it is clear that the other elements of support, process, stimulation, empowerment, individuals, knowledge, values, skills, understanding, confidence, creativity and enjoyment, roles, circumstances and environments generally implied in the working definition can be applied to coping with some of the challenges induced by globalization. Indeed, the position adopted in seeking solution to the challenges lies in bringing into fruition a human development model for Africa which is aimed at making its peoples willing and able to comprehend and compete in globalization processes which could alienate them for a long time unless they embark on timely interventions such as the one intended in the present discussion.

Lifelong education has been touched by globalization. Again the concept of globalization is not new in any way. For globalization is often linked with colonialism, and it confines the old patterns of power between the core (usually the North) and the periphery (usually the South) as identified by the dependency theorists (Bhola 1998: 488). At present, there are hundreds of definitions of globalization that we cannot altogether examine. It is understandable that the concept has been used indiscriminately, and this only compounds the confusion built around the different connotations.

Johnston (1990: 18) defines globalization as the increasing interdependence and interconnectedness of people of the world in their request to improve the general condition of life for all human beings. This way, it seems the main purpose of applying globalization is the improvement of the living conditions of all human beings.

The search for ways of improving living conditions cannot be easy. Consequently, Beveridge (1996: 69) urges us to take globalization as a revolutionary transformation process which seeks to dismantle all barriers to international trade and free capital movement in order to create a single, global market. This definition emphasizes the economic slant of the concept featuring, among other things, the following:

- (1) Instant movement of capital from one country to another.
- (2) Corporations' management of production on a global scale, leaping national borders in search of lower costs and higher profits.
- (3) The raising ratio of world trade, compared to other forms of trade.

But the economic intentions of globalization should actually be seen as being encompassed by geopolitical manifestations.

Harris (1996: 5–10) and Bowers (1992: 11–126) propose that the networks of modern technoscience go beyond the reach of nation-states and become global in the topological sense that a globe has more varied possibilities. What emerges out of this conceptualization is the fact that globalization entails the maximization of opportunities available to us such as that our living conditions might be improved, all other things remaining equal. The maximization of opportunities, as we know, is only meaningful to the extent that competitors enjoy comparative advantages reflecting elements of equality.

Historically, the forces which drive globalization have been in operation for many years. If, indeed, globalization is a political and socio-economic phenomenon with global unification for different purposes, we must see it as sprouting, for example from attempts to bring into form the League of Nations in 1917. Subsequent developments led to the formation of the United Nations with all its organs and agencies geared towards making the world a better place to live in.

Since 1950, the economic forces driving globalization have become so powerful that it has tended to influence almost every sphere of concern. Beveridge (1996: 70), quoting Campbell (1993), has identified the major forces driving globalization since 1950 as follows:

- (1) Simultaneous technological revolutions in computers, telecommunication and transport;
- (2) Changes in government policies both domestic and foreign (especially policies aimed at the liberalisation of trade and capital flows);

- (3) Corporate and individual investor strategies; and
- (4) A powerful *liases-faire* ideology of deregulation, privatization and liberalization.

These forces have acted together to establish persons and nations with similar interests and goals, and who, therefore, try to unite for obvious gains.

We do know as well, that globalization has emerged from the union of the 1970s and 1980s resurgent neo-classical economic theory which stimulated corporate interests and indeed, from the privately financed forum established in 1972 became known as the Trilateral Commission. The Commission represented American, European and Japanese corporate business interests and was meant to devise means of managing the global economy and, in particular, dismantle the so-called Keynesian welfare state. Actually, these moves were supposed to 'midwife' the birth of the 'triumph of capitalism'. The consequences of these moves are obvious to us.

As would be obvious in the views already expressed the consequences are firstly economic. Economic because globalization has often evolved in rapid structural economic change that requires fast and huge capital transfers, and, as Brown (1993: 3-17) notes, the rapid development of information technology, new opportunities for international production and exchange of services amidst the declining role of the nation state and the deregulation of economic systems.

Globalization has had its geopolitical meanings as well for economic policies do impact on politics, because any political system has to be secured so that the global capital transfer, investment and production processes are not endangered. The internationalization, which is depicted in globalization, implies that environmental and population threats are becoming too broad and menacing to be left to one nation state. And beyond this there is need for the establishment of transnational identities and a new international 'civil society' that can effectively cater for the world citizenry (Mann 1997: 473-474). The optimism implied in the socio-economic and political manifestations of globalization has been questioned by 'pessimists' who are reminding us about the need to be wary about the unintended negative consequences of the phenomenon.

To really comprehend and contextualize globalization, it might be useful to examine some of its basic assumptions.

Basic assumptions of globalization

One basic assumption that may have propelled into action the present globalization schemes throughout the world is the slow rate at which the development gap between and among nations is being bridged.

In the economic context, for example, there is serious concern that the special distribution of income across societies is getting ever more uneven. This is a situation Peet (1991: 6) has lamented thus:

The high-income people of the First World, constituting 15% of global population, have 75% of the world's income; the low-income countries of the Third World, with 56% of the global population have less than 5% of the world's income...

This imbalance may be rapidly addressed by deliberately sharpening the abilities of Third World nations to enter into globalization. For example, the people could be

empowered socio-economically such that they can pool their resources together in an efficient manner to invest on-and-offshore. Moreover, it is probably time for Africans to accept that state-run economic activities in the form of corporations may not be the best way to promote rapid economic development. The example of several African nations prove this point. Nigeria which is supposed to be the sixth world largest exporter of crude oil is perpetually battling with an energy crisis. That crisis has virtually paralysed Nigeria's economy. Yet, there are public corporations such as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) with its subsidiaries and the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) which are not functioning satisfactorily.

In the socio-political context, the dividing line between the First and Third Worlds is even more obvious than ever before. Whereas in the First World, the skyline is inundated with towering skyscrapers, the Third World has continued to exhibit growing numbers of squatter locations and homelessness, to take just one example. Politically, whereas the First World appears to enjoy political stability that invites investors, the Third World continues to be bedevilled by political instability, coups and counter coups and, sometimes, endless political transition programmes.

In the light of these imbalances, academics continue to propose theories of uneven development aimed at comprehending realities so that solutions leading to equality might be critically examined and applied. Peet (1991: 9) proposes two systems supporting theories of uneven development, namely:

- (1) that based on evolutionary biology for explanatory power and lending weight to the strong or deterministic thesis and the weak or possibilistic thesis; and
- (2) that based on dependency.

While not seeking to pursue both theories to any significant epistemological conclusion here, it might be useful for us to rely considerably on Peet (1991) in distilling the kernel inherent in both theories in order to provide some basis for the positions that might eventually emerge in our analysis of Africa's proper status in globalization.

The evolutionary biology theory argues that geographic differences in human achievement are the inevitable effects of prior variations in natural environment. To that extent, human achievement and the differences, which are observable, are determined more by vocational natural endowment than by anything else. This is what has lent credence to two emerging versions of this theory, namely:

- (1) the strong (deterministic) thesis which posits that nature creates and nurtures people with unequal potentials of consciousness and effective action; and
- (2) the weak (possibilistic) thesis, which posits that nature, endows people with superior resource environments, which allow for easier or quicker development in some places than in others.

Eventually, this theory of natural inevitability and environmental determination declined in importance. Conversely, there is a neo-marxist oriented dependency theory, which emerged after the failure of modernization theory, which tends to explain regional differences in terms of the diffusion of modern institutions from original cores of Euro-America. But the dependency theory, which posits that contact with the Europe may really bring 'modern' elements to the societies of the Third World, has also connected them to an exploitative social order.

Considering the theories highlighted above, one is bound to propose the need to examine the objectives and clear manifestations of globalization.

The political manifestation of globalization in many countries in Africa is visible. The political systems of Africa have undergone profound militarization and civil dictatorships. For example, Nigeria, Ghana, Niger, Benin, Togo, Algeria, Libya, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and the Gambia have at various times been under military dictatorships. Togo has been under civil dictatorship just as has been Kenya under Arap Moi and Malawi under Kamuzu Banda.

Good as the intentions of political globalization have been in Africa, there has been profound ambivalence and prevarication in some cases. The overthrow of the legitimate government in Congo Brazzaville went ahead without vigorous opposition just as the winner of the democratic elections of June 1993 in Nigeria, Chief Moshood K. Abiola was pressurized to abandon his popular mandate until he died in jail in July 1998.

The political globalization of Africa is alleged to have introduced the fear of the erosion of political sovereignty and the enthroning of what Harris (1996: 5) describes as corporate power. Harris (1996: 6) has quoted Estabrooks (1988) as having argued that now it is the Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and Trans-national Corporations (TNCs) and not governments that are at the helm of global politics. The TNCs and MNCs are held by Estabrooks (1988) and others to be in power economically and politically. It remains to be argued convincingly whether this is for good or for bad.

But the fact which emerges from this fear is that African leaders need to be competent enough to manage the politics of globalization.

One other obvious fact is that the quest for economic control often goes hand-in-hand with that of securing democratic legitimacy. It is, therefore, natural that those who are investing capital for economic control must of necessity demand appropriate forms of governance which can bring about appropriate civil society wherein socio-economic goals can be pursued with certainty. Where this is not the case, appropriate actions, including sanctions and social ostracization, tend to be generated.

Socio-cultural globalization

This form of globalization in Africa has actually preceded other forms. Aided by the explosion in communication technology, much of Africa had been laid bare to all manner of influences.

Socio-cultural globalization in many countries in Africa has been criticized for some negative consequences. For example, the style of dressing, speaking, conduct, music and eating among others are largely foreign. Values like respect for the elderly have been dashed. Instances of declining utility and the role of the African extended family systems are obvious. But one must resist the temptation of being over-sensitive since some might argue that there have been some good in this form of globalization. This might well be so but the fact is that the African social system is in grave danger of being completely eroded. However, African values can only be better reassessed and preserved through regular schemes of research, dissemination and preservation.

The monoculture anticipated in social globalization has meant for Africa the readiness to explore values which should be exported. For instance, the African virtues

of communal living and sharing, the upholding of the dignity of humankind, good neighbourliness, humanness, avoidance of racism and ethnic chauvinism, among others, that are obviously lacking in some other continents are valuable and could be diffused globally for global peace, love and unity. As a matter of fact, the unique closeness that had been the lot of Africans could be introduced and 'sold' to the world. The world could be taught to understand, appreciate and adopt the African warmth and kind-heartedness, which is lacking in many other cultures.

Economic globalization

We earlier stated that the phenomenon known as globalization is driven more by economic motives than by any other consideration in terms of intensity. It is necessary to remind ourselves that economic globalization is an economic revolutionary transformation on a global scale. This transformation is aimed at increasing the tempo of economic operation and the promotion of consumerism.

For economic globalization to work, it is required that every barrier to export competitiveness, free trade and free capital movement must be demolished in the attempt to create a single global market. Indeed, instant capital movement across boundaries without any hindrance in the quest for lower costs and higher profits is the guiding principle. Integration and deregulation are the grease required for economic locomotion. Africa has been exposed to the effects of economic globalization. The gains are there in the opening up of the economy for competition even if it meant doing so on unequal terms. Problems have emerged and as a result.

There have been the problems of the inability of many African nations to control their monetary and fiscal policies. The debt burden has tended to become ever more burdensome as there are at the same time increases in job losses, downsizing of government corporations and government labour forces, retrenchment with its potency for enhancing political and social disintegration and the intensification of impoverishment. In some instances it seems that economic globalization is ending up by providing material abundance to some while the masses continue to wallow in poverty, misery, ignorance, disease and hopelessness. These problems pose challenges to our leaders and scholars. But we cannot afford to erect barriers to globalization in an attempt to protect ourselves and recapture an earlier era of independence. To do so is to confuse the cause and effect of globalization (Sutherland 1998: 2).

Globalization in education

Education cannot be isolated from critical influences. Globalization in education has taken the form of compelling the schools and other education sectors to prepare for the competition in the global economy. Beveridge (1996: 70) laments that education has been converted into a commodity for trade and subject to the new international trade deals and services.

Beveridge (1996: 70) and other scholars in his line of argument have alleged that sometimes African nations must downsize expenditure on education and engage in the harmonization of standards so as to facilitate the mobility and the portability of professional skills or that tertiary institutions downsize their staff strengths or even close down if necessary as was the case in the Edo State College of Education in Nigeria in

1997. Fortunately, these expectations have been successfully countered by African scholars who have resisted the political manipulation of the education systems with some degree of success even under military dictatorship regimes, as was the case in Nigeria.

Globalization in education has posed challenges to scholarship in Africa. The flow of academic information from European and American institutions of higher education into Africa continues to reveal the weaknesses in Africa scholarship. It may be argued that conditions for scholarship in Africa are years behind those prevailing in the Northern Hemisphere. Even so the realities of the African situation are a challenge to organize more collaborative initiatives aimed at enhancing standards in research, scholarship, training and scholarly development such that Africa can compete favourably and successfully. African academics cannot lament the Northern Hemisphere dominance of scholarship and training without identifying the root cause of the problems as well as viable solutions for overcoming them.

What should lifelong education do?

It is true that lifelong education, as a movement, process, programme and method, has no supermacro economic, social and political structures with which it can deal directly with the globalization challenges confronting Africa. But it has a vision and can infuse people such that they can comprehend the objectives and process of globalization. Law and Low (1997: 113) confirm the conviction among some scholars in the South that lifelong education is an essential capability in a people, workforce and a society in the determined effort to compete effectively and successfully in a global economy.

An assessment of the 'Africaness' of the present drive for globalization must leave one unimpressed. For example, how much input of the people of Africa can one see in global economic corporations like Natwest, Merrill Lynch, Deutsche Morgan Granfell, J. P. Morgan, Ing Barrings, the Swiss UBS Securities, SBC Warburg Securities among a host of others?

African nations cannot expect any revision of the principles of globalization; it is not reasonable to expect any other nation to slow down the process of becoming a strong competitor. If anything, globalization requires greater competitiveness from developing economies. Any nation's capability in this direction could be enhanced by reinvigorated management capabilities. This is possible through providing opportunities for effective human resource development programmes. This is where lifelong education has the greatest potential for a meaningful contribution towards coping with the challenges.

We are aware that lifelong education is a specialization and as a specialization, it is limited by its tendency to provide fragmentary or what Peet (1991: 30–40) calls aspect biased disciplinary approaches to dealing with problems emanating from a variegated subject like globalization. For example, how can lifelong education alone offer strategies for dealing with the challenges facing Africa particularly as this phenomenon is concerned unless contributors are inviting economic, socio-cultural and political studies. Limited as specialization's might seem to be when dealing with global schemes such as this, they are capable of providing fruitful insights. This article takes the view that lifelong education can help many countries in Africa as far as this phenomenon is concerned.

The first task lifelong education must undertake in this particular instance is that of generating awareness. It must utilize its structures to educate the people from the top to

the grassroots levels about the nature, objectives, structures and processes of globalization. There is profound ignorance as to what globalization is all about, and how it will affect the people. For example, do people understand the slogan 'think globally, act locally'? It is meaningless to the illiterate, hungry, unemployed, homeless, hopeless and sick masses of the people. It can only make meaning to them if directed against the cause of their frustration.

An important component of this endeavour to create awareness will mean incorporating the tacit understanding of globalization in a subtle way into the popular education programmes like the national literacy campaigns, empowerment schemes and income generation. Another foundation we can build is the integration of globalization principles and processes into the curricula used in formal schools. Creating an awareness of the nature, objectives and operational mechanism of globalization at the level of basic education is an irreducible minimum for building up the continent's reserve of expertise needed for coping with the challenges.

A related vital task would require that scholars in Africa step up movements for the better funding and promotion of all forms of education. In particular, there is need to ensure that the lifelong education programmes we have initiated are strengthened in such a way as to illicit favourable spontaneous response from our peoples. For studies have proved that the lower the initial education, the less likely the learner will be to continue learning in the adult years (Law and Low 1997: 114). All categories of people (including the workforce) need to upgrade continuously their knowledge and skills.

The second task relates to the stimulation and provision of fora for academic discussions emphasizing self-criticism on the part of all stakeholders. This differs from the first approach in the sense that the stakeholders in this case should comprise of the present 'winners' and 'winners-to-be' in the game pattern of globalization. The self-criticism intended here is that which is capable of fostering deep understanding of the forces at play in globalization and of how best a balance can be struck in the interest of all. If, for example, the poorer and disadvantaged African nations understood the root cause of their disadvantage, they might well be motivated into undertaking liberators action.

The third task for lifelong education is that of using the social action programmes in community development to ease the pains of transition from the local realities of existence to global ones. Globalization entails a gestation period during which the people must understand, experiment and adopt (or reject) new alternatives in all spheres of international exchange. When lifelong education acts in a manner that eases this transition it might reduce the incidents of tension and, sometimes, disruptive behaviours.

The fourth task relates to that of using lifelong education structures to accelerate community beaming through placing emphasis on beaming centres, and what Harris (1996: 9) calls, community 'narrowcasting' which open doors for voices from the South as far as this subject is concerned. Socio-cultural globalization has prompted the saturation of Africa's cultural environment with media products up to the point that the people's culture is becoming almost totally irrelevant and extinct with all the attendant grave consequences. Lifestyles and patterns of thought are so negatively influenced that whatever cultural advancement Africa made in the last three decades is dwarfed. Indeed, we now have to contend with the so-called global citizenship in which there is hardly any foothold for Africa's cultural traits. The suggested community - 'narrow-casting' programmes geared towards promoting Africa's cultural traits would require the intellectual attention of academics from diverse disciplines.

Lifelong education, in the fifth task, can initiate linkages, which would mediate the building up of relevant African research and knowledge bases, which can prepare the people for global competition. Concern here will be about practices that have worked and which can be developed for entry into global competition with good chances of success.

To date, balanced information exchange in scholarship is glaringly lacking among the Lusophone, Francophone and Anglophone blocs within Africa. Exchange can be facilitated through the breaking down of communication barriers. This becomes the sixth task. For example, relevant learning packages on globalization could be simultaneously translated for more rapid dissemination across the blocs.

The seventh task consists of the need for lifelong education in Africa to open up linkages with those in the North with a view to working out areas of co-operation and collaborative research. This establishment of linkages must also be extended to staff and student exchanges. But if this linkage proves to be rather slow in coming, then African nations with appreciable technological foundations could through their relevant government ministries, well-meaning private companies and non-governmental organizations bring into reality a much more vigorous borderless, versatile, multifaceted scientific and technological competency based training than the continent has ever witnessed.

The eighth task relates to human capital review, formation, modernization and acceleration. The ability to compete depends, to a great extent, on human capital since all other advantages may remain inert without this one. This means that the programmes of lifelong education in the sphere of professional continuing education must be strewnlined to reflect globalization in terms of enhancing the people's capability to enter into the competition (Oduaran 1997: 99). For example, it might be possible to run a continental workshop on how the people can enter safely into offshore investment. Furthermore, the trend towards skill enhancement instead of deskilling, preproduction technology instead of mere production, and mental skilling instead of manual skilling has obvious implications for human capitalization programmes. Lifelong education needs to reflect this reality.

In this regard, many African countries like South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Ghana to name but a few, that are at the basic level of technological development may choose to lead the way in preparing our peoples for effective competition in globalization. Towards realizing this goal, African nations have a lot to borrow from Singapore, a country in the South. The Singaporean model of entry into globalization has required political will and commitment as well as the mounting of vigorous national training programmes made up of Basic Education for Skills Training (BEST), Worker Improvement through Secondary Education (WISE), Modular Skills Training (MOST), Training Initiative for Mature Employees (TIME), the Adult Co-operative Training Scheme (ACTS) and the Certified On-the-Job Training Centre (COJTC), all of which have complemented formal education initiatives to produce a solid basis for competitiveness. The experience here seems to prove that nothing is impossible for any nation and, indeed any continent that is committed to striving to be subject rather than mere object of the global historical process.

Finally, there should be a deliberate effort to enforce policies on lifelong education in the continent. So far it seems that existing policies are a mere expression of intentions. In several African countries, less than 2% (instead of the minimum of 5%) of the GNP is allocated to education in general and much less to the education of adults. The

problem here is that when allocation to education declines, human capital suffers and our chances of facing up to real competition globally are in jeopardy. This is our real technical crisis.

Conclusion

We have tried within the context of this paper to selectively examine the phenomenon of globalization; its challenges and the role lifelong education could play in strengthening Africa in the process of entering into the implied competition. Since the proper comprehension and the application of the concept of globalization should depend on the articulation of several issues, we had examined summarily Africa's differences and commonalities. This was what we did in the context of how globalization and lifelong education may apply in homogenizing and heterogeneous ways. Furthermore, we applied lifelong education to the technique of how we might enhance Africa's participation in globalization. For we believe that it is possible to bring about the needed variety of organized and systematic opportunities for learning throughout the lifespan by legislating education systems with equal access for all. Towards achieving the goal of applying lifelong education to globalization, it was recommended that there is need to integrate education systems horizontally and vertically in Africa. In exploring the origins, basic assumptions, objectives and principles of globalization, we highlighted its political, socio-cultural, economic and educational manifestations in Africa. Based on these manifestations, we offered propositions as to what lifelong education could and should do in order to enhance Africa's capability to compete favourably in the global phenomenon called globalization.

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