Globalization, Education and the Birth of a Democratically Active Global Citizen

Agreement Lathi Jotia, Ph.D.

University of Botswana

Department of Languages and Social Sciences

Faculty of Education

Private Bag 00702

Gaborone

Botswana

Email: agreementjotia@yahoo.com

Abstract

Globalization is truly inescapable. However, the challenges posed by this socio-economic and political system is that it appears to be creating gaps of prosperity between the Global North (GN) and Global South (GS), thus perpetuating arguments against its legitimacy as a sound and balanced global economic system. This essay addresses some of the arguments surrounding globalization and specifically exposes some of the challenges that globalization poses especially regarding the production of democratically active global citizens. One of the key questions that the essay poses is; global citizen created in whose image?

Keywords: Globalization, Education, Global Citizen and Democracy.

The whole subject of globalization has faced a number of criticisms from some world leaders, the business sector, trade unions, economists, environmentalists, the list is long. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have been, and continue to be blamed for perpetuating globalization policies, which are seen by many as having caused, and continue to cause a lot of economic disparities in a number of countries, especially those in the Global South (GS).

This economic phenomenon is viewed as geared towards further burying the economies that are currently struggling and see no hope in "economic resurrection." Contrarily, other theorists and pro-globalization groups contend that the globalization wave is a true messiah to global socio-economic and politic hiccups which currently negatively affects a lot of lives.

Debt continues to tear a lot of developing countries into shambles and some have gone to the extent of loosing aid from the IMF and the WB because they cannot stand the test of time in trying to pay the debt. Developing countries then continue grumbling that globalization is nothing but another form of organized and advanced imperialism that is going to benefit economies in the Global North (GN). Of course globalization is inescapable but one wonders what it will take for the process to become 'democratic' to accommodate both parties involved on an equal footing. How do we even produce democratically active 'global citizens' who can spearhead the aspirations of globalization with the welfare of every nation at heart?

Although globalization might be facing a lot of criticism, it will be naïve for one to conclude that globalization has no positive results. When addressing the globalization issue, it is essential that we look at what is embraced in its definition and assess whether globalization can be of benefit to the "global village" as well as the international political economy in particular. Globalization seeks to address issues on speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental patterns of social interaction so as to benefit humanity. Held and Mc Grew (2002:1) define globalization as a shift or transformation in the scale of human organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across the world's regions and continents. From this definition, it could be deduced that globalization is a panacea that seeks to achieve social, political and economic integration amongst states so as to better lives for all.

However, syntaxical and semantical analyses of the word globalize poses a bit of a problem when scrutinizing the word. When you globalize, obviously there is an issue of the *subject* (doer of action) versus the globalized- the *object* (receiver of action). Now

within this context, who is the globalizer and who is the globalized? Doesn't it therefore hold water to contest that the scale of globalization is skewed on the basis of the fact that most powerful states- GN become the *doers of action* whereas the less powerful –GS become the *receivers of action*?

Let it be noted that the reason why globalization is facing a lot of music from its critics, especially those from the GS, is because states feel that the economic liberalization that globalization seems to preach, appears to be displaying a lot of hegemony from the North which eventually marginalizes the developing nations. Globalization is highly contested in this case because the interconnectedness that is being 'promoted' appears to be breeding a chain of animosities between the *haves* and *have nots.* Stiglitz (2003) asserts "even conservative politicians such as France's [now former] president, Jacques Chirac, have expressed concern that globalization is not making life better for those in need of its promised benefits" (p.4)

Herald and McGrew (2002) charge that it would be erroneous in the first place for the anti-globalists to associate globalization with Westernization or Americanization because it operates with the welfare of all nations at heart. The contention is that globalization is a process that has shown massive improvements on the growth of the multinational corporations (MNCs), financial markets, communication as well as ameliorating environmental problems. According to Herald and McGrew's angle of argument, globalization is seen as a transformational process in the world economic order that seeks to address the constraints of space and time, technological differences, re-organization of the relationship between territory and socio-economic and political space. By so doing, globalization is understood to be bringing to birth the idea of building one "global village" whereby people are going to live together symbiotically. Honestly, is the relationship symbiotic or it is speedily becoming parasitic?

Schroeder (2002:1) sees globalization as a productive process by noting that the virtual revolutionary modernization of markets, infrastructures, as well as the information and communications technologies has opened up entirely new prospects for the world and has

also lifted more people out of poverty than ever before in history. If that be the case then, why so much noise about globalization? Stiglitz (2003:6) advance:

> If globalization has not succeeded in reducing poverty, neither has it succeeded in ensuring stability. Crisis in Asia and in Latin America have threatened the economies and the stability of all developing countries….Globalization and the introduction of a market economy has not produced the promised results in Russia and most of the other economies making the transition from communism to the market.

The GS often condemns the developed nations for not doing enough to rescue their economic crisis and Stiglitz's logic certainly helps make a solid case. The former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, put it more bluntly when declaring; "Our societies are overwhelmed by the strident consequences of globalization and the phenomenon of trade liberalization. The options open to us have narrowed as our increasingly shrinking world imposes on our countries a choice of integration or the severe conditions of marginalization and stagnation."(www.globalpolicy.org). There we go again; the 'weeping boys of Africa' are at it again before the wounds of colonization could not heal.

Most of the African trade unionists are calling for an atmosphere where the need for poverty reduction, debt relief, and international financial stability should be given the highest priority. They also contest that the IMF and the WB policies should be revisited and seek the opinion of African people. Stiglitz (2003) observes:

> For the peasants in developing countries who toil to pay off their countries' debts or the businessmen who suffer from the higher value-added taxes upon the insistence of the IMF, the current system run by the IMF is one of taxation without representation. Disillusion with the international system of globalization under the aegis of the IMF grows as the poor in Indonesia, Morocco, or Papua New Guinea have fuel and food subsidies cut, as those in Thailand see AIDS

increase as a result of IMF-forced cutbacks in health expenditures, and as families in many developing countries, having to pay for their children's' education under so-called cost recovery programs, make the painful choice not to send their daughters to school.

Most of the African leaders see globalization as a strategic tool used by the ideology of liberal democracy to consume the resources of Africa once again. It is seen as a capitalist fuelled engine that is driven by the Western imperialists. Mengisteab (1996:21) appears to be concurring with this assertion by advancing that the global environment is increasingly becoming more hostile for African countries. As a matter of fact, a lot of underdeveloped countries are feeling the pinch and a remedy to this socio-economic and political madness is still to be brewed.

Challenging globalization, the Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe is totally against it and advances that to date Africa does not have the capacity to enter the global village since the continent is still grappling to put up basic necessities such as roads, railway and transport (Global Policy Forum: 2000). Though it is true that most of the African countries are still struggling to provide the basic necessities to the people, it is surprising on the other hand to hear a person of Mugabe's caliber sounding this way because his government to some degree is to blame for the economic collapse of Zimbabwe, which in turn has affected the entire southern Africa. At times it helps to organize ones' own house before complaining about the mess in somebody's house.

Though some world leaders see globalization as socio-economic and political devil, it should be noted that some see it as a real blessing geared towards the betterment of lives of the underdeveloped. Addressing the 21st Century Conference 2000 in China, the former president of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire, positively stated; "Humanity has a common destiny, in this respect, the recognition and acceptance of the fact that we can not wish each other away, and that we have to work together for our collective prosperity is an essential milestone in our relationship."(People's Daily: 2000). Masire's statement could be understood to be for the idea that globalization is an essential process which

needs nations to cooperate for the better. Indeed no country can exist in isolation and the same is true that no sustainable development can take place without international cooperation. However, this is not to say the nation-state should subject itself to the tunes and dictates of globalization even though the writing could be on the wall that they risk being exploited. Masire further sounded, obviously to the jubilance of the Western states, that; "The value of cross border collaboration in trade, politics, diplomacy, arts and cultures is now indisputable in regional economic integration as a basis for economic globalization" (People's Daily: 2000). The unfortunate thing about president Masire's observations is that although he points that humanity should have a common destiny, to our utter dismay, within the globalization process-we see many destinies reached on the basis of ones geo-political location as well as the socio-economic and political position.

Globalization would not be facing a lot of criticism if it really had policies that take into account the welfare of the developed countries. For it to receive maximum support from the third world, it should open doors for diverse opportunities in terms of goods and services that will benefit the "global citizens." Shaw (1982:225) posits that perhaps no other part of the world needs economic attention more than Africa so as for economic problems to be eradicated. Policies that promote the creation of employment and the government revenues should be given a priority as a matter of urgency. On the other hand, Stiglitz (2003) maintains "Globalization can be reshaped, and when it is properly, fairly run, with all countries having a voice in policies affecting them, there is a possibility that it will help create a new global economy in which growth is not only more sustainable and less volatile but the fruits of this growth are more equitably shared"(p.22).This reshaping process herein suggested should absolutely embrace the involvement of a democratically versatile and diversity sensitive 'global citizen.'

Globalization and the Dilemma of Democratically Active Global Citizen

Democracy (whatever that means) is a prerequisite for the globalization's development process. Therefore, in order for globalization to further its wings across the globe, it certainly has to be fuelled by the engines of democratically active global citizens. However, we hit a snag as we begin to pose and question; what do we mean by

democracy? What is a global citizen? In whose image or culture is the global citizen created? Do we have the so-called global citizen? The issue of identity is significant within the globalization scope. Some identities are lost as different people across the globe quickly 'catch the flu' on cultural deculturalization and assimilation so as to produce global cultural pluralism. The dominant cultures swiftly wipe away the most docile and inculcate the values and norms of the dominant culture. Also in the process, state power and sovereignty become decentralized. Castelles (cited in Burbules and Torres, 2000:37) reflect:

> While global capitalism thrives, and nationalist ideologiest explode all over the world, the nation-state, as historically created in the Modern Age, seems to be losing its power, although, and this is essential, *not its influence...*Indeed the growing challenge to state's sovereignty around the world seems to originate from the inability of the modern nation-state to navigate the uncharted, stormy waters between the power of global networks and the challenge of singular identities. The instrumental capacity of the nation-state is decisively undermined by globalization of core economic activities, by globalization of media and electronic communication, and by globalization of crime.

In view of the above, whether good or bad, the challenges of globalization call for the 'birth' of critically conscious and democratically active global citizens who can contribute positively towards the amelioration of the problems/challenges at hand. Within the package of globalization is also the dreadful animal-terrorism whose presence and impact cannot be ignored and as such it has to be tackled rationally by the well-informed and intellectually conscious "global citizens." At the center of discussion is the fact that the advancement of the democratic ideals can once more give us hope to build a better democratic world for those on the planet earth today and generations to come. Education within the era of globalization should be used to transmit a culture of socio-economic and political freedom which respects prosperity for all as well as promoting global patriotic fervor.

The most troubling scenario though is that as much as we cherish the democratic aspirations, democracy as a concept and system of government has lost meaning. Wars are declared in the name of democracy. Terrorism is advanced in the name of democracy. Manifestations of coups take place under the pretext of trying to advance democratic ideals. Corruption in some instances suffices in the name of democracy. And of course, globalization is regarded as a process that cherishes democracy across the globe. Now, given this pictures of what democracy is or should look like, obviously the democratically active global citizen has a mammoth task of trying to unearth the truth about exactly what the qualities of a democracy and the characteristics of a democratic global citizen should be.

The global democratic hope is now so difficult and complex to deal with especially after September 11th 2001 (9/11) when terrorists declared war on the soils of the world police-United States of America (USA). Green (2007) argues that 9/11 has triggered confusion within the American democratic process and now the American people are sick at heart because the long-shared democratic values have been diluted by terrorist's acts and in the process leaving American people confused and divided more than ever before. She mentions that within the search for answers for true American democracy after 9/11, there are those who deem the growing economic inequality as a sign of capitalism's success and those who see it as a sign of failure. Some, within the most powerful American democracy, have even quickly forgotten the thousands of dead Black bodies and the countless tearful Black survivors of Hurricane Katrina, or who regard the incalculable devastation of New Orleans as God's judgment on this American Gomorrah, and those who regard the abject, racialized poverty Katrina revealed, as well as our nations refusal or inability to care for our own fellow citizens, as history's judgment on American democracy (p.3).

Powerful as the USA's democracy is, it goes without saying that when these giant democracy is threatened, then other 'boy-like democracies' will automatically feel the inherit threat. It is therefore not surprising that when the USA declared the current war on Iraq, former President Bush's television announcement entailed statements which

reflected that since the USA is at war, then the whole world is at war more so *the world's democracy* is under threat. In agreement, Rizvi (2003) adds; "The widespread perception that the war On terrorism constitutes an attempt by the USA to impose upon the world a new political order through which its hegemonic power is entrenched, perhaps even extended, certainly appears justifiable (p.26). Going by Rizvi's analysis regarding president Bush's line of thought, it could be argued therefore that the 'global citizen' within the globalization spectrum, should have a diverse and dynamic democratic vision so as to reflect on socio-economic and political gimmicks of globalization and come up with universal solutions which could be applied at home and abroad.

Green (2007:5) shares that this democratic vision is what Dewey referred to as a "metaphysic of the common man," and that it's effective employment is necessary within any comprehensive cure to the "democratic disease" that now ails the people. Definitely so, within the process of globalization, we have a democratic disease, whereby capitalist ideals are advanced at the expense of the masses for the benefit of some. The dilemma of education in the global democratic state is that it has to deal with the arrogantly imposed ideas and beliefs which are supposed to nurture the birth, growth and the glorification of the global market economy at the expense of the needs of varying local societies. Therefore, the emerging "global citizen" in education should be empowered with the freedom of choice and independent decision-making without fear of victimization. The current system of global education is designed such that it produces puppets of the status quo; therefore acting contrary to the dictates of the powers that be could be seen as act of terrorism or a danger to the global liberal market economy.

If truly democracy is about associated living as Dewey envisioned, then why is it that within this process of associated living, in the age of globalization, we have more economic losers and mourners than winners? Solutions to the democratic disease should therefore come from the people but the unfortunate thing though is that the people are denied a voice at the globalization table. The echo we hear is that of the IMF, WB and WTO plus the most powerful countries, the rest of the world is marginalized. Education therefore has a task to ascertain that it does not only produce graduates who traditionally

just dance to the tunes of the status quo but can also struggle radically for the incorporation and the advancements of global multicultural tolerance. Spring (1994) indicates that a number of widely read books and articles which appeared in the USA in the late 1980s and early 1990s defended the necessity of maintaining Western cultural traditions and cultural unity against the rise of multiculturalism. What was true between 1980-1990, is true even today whereby we see globalization preaching a gospel of one global village at the expense of various diverse cultures. The global ideology of producing monolithic culture is tantamount to abandoning and undermining the democratic ideal within a complex diverse 'global village.' There is nowhere schools can teach and promote only one culture because doing so will be similar to advocating for the empowerment of a chosen few, thus suppressing other differing political and cultural views (Spring, 1994). As such, the global democratic citizen should have the ability to freely exercise reason so as to protect the rights and liberties of all those on-board of the globalization subway.

Therefore; it is saddening to note that the so-called "global citizen" might end up or is being created within the image of the most post powerful imperialistic nations. The democratic disease will therefore end up assuming epidemic proportions as the cultures of the *globlizers* end up squandering those of the *globalized*. Collaborative democratic cultural recognition and revitalization within the process of globalization is fundamental to reaching a common destiny with cultural pluralistic cultural pride. Cultural homogenization as currently approached by the liberalization of democracies and economic markets is stifling the birth of a "true global democrat" who can critically think globally and productively act locally. Education and the curriculum therefore should educate for the empowerment of mental faculties to the degree that the learner (global citizen) can question the global societal ills and injustices without being hesitant.

Lost identities in globalization are a treat to culture and democracy as a form of associated living. According to Rizvi (2003) the cure and healing of the global despair cooked by terrorism can be found in the possibilities of transnational democracy and education which has the potential of delivering hope for world peace and security. Rizvi

(2003:28) quickly cautions that this form of democracy should be formulated in such a way that the West becomes respectful of global diversity and should not seek to impose their own version of democracy on people who are deeply distrustful of its hegemonic interests. Liberal democracy is a foundational child of globalization more so the IMF and the WB also channel resources towards the establishment of democracies-democracy aid. Good idea, but whose democracy? How come it is presumed that one size of democracy can fit all within the global umbrella? The global democratic citizen should be educated to often view or consider global democratic alternatives on the basis of global dialogue.

The global education systems (not only those from the west) should be at the center of producing democratic citizens who can look at the world with a common spirit of humanity. In the words of Rizvi (2003:27), what needs to be emphasized now is the urgency of new institutional building across cultural traditions, the acknowledgement of justice issues posed by polarization of wealth, income and power and the pursuit of interests common to humanity as a whole…Democratic aspirations exist in all cultural traditions, even if they are expressed in radically different ways. The challenge is to create transnational democratic institutions in which these aspirations can be explored and enacted; in which dialogue, understanding and bridge-building take place at all of the interpersonal, intercultural and international levels.

Conclusion

The above statements are absolutely logical, in the process of educating and globalizing, it is crucially rational that the promotion of the cultural-traditions of the learner should be valued so that the democratically active learner can effect change on the socio-economic and political atmosphere of their countries which ultimately would be of significance to the globalization process. As such, globalization would become a platform of socio-economic and political enrichment which values diversity in its attempt to build one harmonious global village.

According to Spring (1994:87), within the global platform, education should be tailored such that it gives people the ability to resist conformity to the opinion of the majority.

The school should become a haven for free thought in a society tending toward conformity to majority opinion. The democratically active 'global citizen' should be the one who values the "use of reason beyond the confines of narrow personal-self interest, as well as protecting the free exercise of reason from the pressures of public opinion…by emphasizing the free exercise of reason and natural rights philosophy, pass on from generation to generation a culture that is supportive of the conditions that make democracy possible" (Spring, 1994: 87). Conclusively, global education should enable the 'global citizen' to develop an intellectual power base that would promote a true cultural global democracy which would breed economic prosperity as well as solidarity and peace for all. This is indeed a milestone task that should be labored for.

References

Afrol.com. Economic Commission for Africa Proposes New Global Compact. Retrieved 1st October, 2008 from www.afrol.com

Burbules, N.C and Torres, C.A. (2000). Globalization and Education: Critical Perspectives. New York: Routledge.

Green, J. (2007). Post-9/11 Cultural Revitalization and Political Re-Inhabitation: A deeply Democratic Metaphysical Therapeutic. New York: Frodham University.

Held, D. and McGrew, A. (2000).Globalization/Anti-Globalization. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Knauder, S. (2000). Globalization, Urban Progress, Rural Disadvantages. Hampshire: Ashagate.

Mengisteab, K. (1996). Globalization and Autocentricity in Africa's Development in the 21st Century. Asmara: Africa World Press.

Nyang'oro, E.J. and Shaw. (1992).T. Beyond Structural Adjustment in Africa. New York: Praeger.

Rivzi, F. (2003). Democracy and Education after September 11. Globalization, Societies and Education, 1 (1) 25-39.

Schroder, G. (2002). "Opportunity Security, Modernization and Justice in Globalization." Retrieved on 12th October, 2008 from (http://eng.bundesregierung.de/dokumente/bacground_German_in_the_Glo...)

Shaw, T. (1996). Alternative Futures for Africa. Boulder: West view Press.

Spring, J. (1994). Wheels in the Head: Educational Philosophies of Authority, Freedom, and Culture from Socrates to Paulo Freire. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Stiglitz, J. E. (2003). Globalization and Its Discontents. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.