

Comprehending Globalization and Local Development

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There are increasing national and international concerns and uncertainties caused by the forces of globalization on local communities in the developing world. Although these are valid concerns, this paper will focus on related and pressing issues on how to identify, accommodate, modify or fully accept practices associated with globalized and localized knowledge. The authors of this article therefore hoped that the issues they are proposing within the paper can contribute to the ongoing debate on globalization vs. localization in both economically developed and the developing world.

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Introduction

Globalization is a word which is becoming too common in the new millennium, mainly due to the rapid growth of information and communication technology (ICT) in the last three decades. To many authors, different types of globalization can be identified even though most of the attention is in the areas of economy, technology, and culture (Brown and Lauder, 1996; Waters, 1995). Other authors such as Cheng (2000, 2001) also described varying type of globalizations, including technological, economic, social, political, cultural and learning globalization.

Authors such as Pratt and Poole, 2000; Green, 1999; Henry *et al.*, 1999; Jones, 1999; Ayyar, 1996; Brown and Lauder, 1996; Little, 1996; Fowler, 1994; McGinn, 1996 Council, 1999) outlined, how education for example, should be responsive to the trends and challenges of globalization and they further stated that this issue should be a major concern for academics, researchers and policy-makers. Furthermore there are also increasing demands for recognizing the values and contributions of local knowledge - widely known as indigenous knowledge (IK) for the wider societal development. It is believed that this recognition needs to be accompanied by appropriate support to maximize the effectiveness of education that is based on national needs which could reflect societal and cultural values and norms as this should be a prerequisite for ongoing human capital development. Therefore there is a need for a paradigm shift first towards localization and then towards globalization to address the wider societal issues in today's developing world.

Various other authors including Cheng, 2000; Waters, 1995 also argued that globalization is creating various opportunities for sharing knowledge, technology, social values and norms promoting development at different levels to individuals, organizations and societies across the globe.

A brief literature review on the promises of globalizations reveals the advantages of globalization to include:

- to global sharing of knowledge, skills, and intellectual assets that are necessary for multiple development at different levels,

- to mutual support, supplement and benefit to produce synergy for the development of countries, communities, and individuals.
- to create values and enhancing efficiency through the above global sharing and mutual support to serving local needs and growth.
- to promote international understanding, collaboration, harmony and acceptance of cultural diversity across countries and regions.
- to facilitate multi-way communications and interactions, and encouraging multi-cultural contributions at different levels among countries.

As the above brief reviews suggest, globalization seems to be the mantra of the day by many countries as the only way to overcome and advance the ailing economies of the developing countries. The advocates of globalization further argue that the low-income countries should open up their doors and embrace the forces of globalization in order to “develop their societies and people”. However there is equally a valued concern about the negative aspects of globalization on local communities – especially in the developing countries. The negative impacts of globalization could be classified as direct or indirect types of political, economic, and cultural colonization and the influences of economically developed countries and the rapidly-increasing gaps between the rich and poor and between the information have and have-nots areas in different parts of the world.

In particular, the negative aspects of globalization could include the following but not limited to:

- exploiting local resources and mimicking and destroying indigenous cultures of the developing countries to only benefit a few advanced countries;
- widening the technological gaps and digital divides between economically developed and developing nations that are hindering equal opportunities for fair global resource sharing;
- facilitating legal/illegal avenues for a few economically developed or rapidly developing countries to economically and politically colonize/influence other countries;
- maximizing imbalance and conflicts between areas and cultures;
- increasing inequalities and conflicts between areas and cultures;

- promoting the dominant cultures and values of the “developed world” and accelerating cultural transplants from advanced areas to less-developed areas.

This direct or indirect impacts of globalization on developing nations are complex issues and beyond the scope of this paper. However the authors of this paper believe that education and human resources development could be the key to redirect the impacts of globalization to the well-being of local communities. Therefore minimizing the unintended negative consequences of globalization requires immediate attention by the academics, researchers, practitioners and other development workers and this should include the educational and pedagogic reform agenda for national development in the developing world. It is therefore paramount to specifically assert and clarify the relationship between the locally immersed and widely practiced indigenous knowledge systems and the western “scientific” knowledge system in the context of globalization

Local vs. global “scientific” knowledge

As various authors such as Desta (2009) argued local/indigenous knowledge and the innovations of local communities are crucial for low income economies in order to achieve cumulative growth as the knowledge of local communities has been tested and found to be valid in a local context and which are accumulated by their respective communities over long period of time.

In ancient and history rich African country like Ethiopia for example, the knowledge base and the existing social context, cultural assets and historical backgrounds is unique and the knowledge and the wisdom of the local people is unquestionably useful and valid despite its potential not being fully recognized and put to good use. As argued by Desta (2010), in contrary however the dominant “global knowledge” is vague as this concept is defined and expressed by different scholars or researchers with uncertainty. For example, for some global knowledge roughly defined and understood as the knowledge that is “scientific” and common to many areas of our world. If we accept this assertion, it is easy to understand that local knowledge certainly contributed or is a part the pool of global knowledge.

Furthermore due to the rapid advancement of ICT and the wide networking, the influence of some knowledge systems, particularly of the economically developed countries on developing nations is undeniably huge. It is therefore paramount for the main stakeholders (i.e. government and its development agencies; agricultural & environmental/education institutions including indigenous communities) in the developing world to find ways how local communities and people can share and exchange their know-hows' on equal basis with the dominant global knowledge system in order to bring a win-win situation to any area of global concerns. Otherwise the inevitable is going to happen (i.e. the local knowledge remain local and inaccessible to the development workers or worst the local/indigenous knowledge is going to irreversibly disappear altogether).

Fostering knowledge in globalized world

As various authors such as (Yu, 2001) & Wada (1993) argued, for example many Asian countries including Japan and China have been interacting with their Western counterparts for more than a century. Many other Asian countries such as India, Thailand, and Korea also experienced a long history of building a knowledge base with the dominant "global force" while at the same time making an effort to maintain their cultural assets and local identities in order to face the challenges exerted by the external forces. As a sequence they largely managed to retain their local/indigenous knowledge base and absorbed external knowledge and relevant resources from the global knowledge system to simultaneously growing their local knowledge system.

The Asian countries experiences demonstrates that fostering local knowledge in globalized education system requires local identity and cultural roots and the curriculum and education system should therefore be based on local values and cultural assets but absorb only suitable global knowledge and technology to support the development of local communities. The selection of global knowledge therefore should depend on the needs of the local communities. The expected outcome of the national education system ought to develop a strong national communities capable of addressing local demands and expectations with international outlook to contribute to the common cause of global concerns.

The benefit of the above approach is that the local/indigenous communities can maintain and develop further their traditional and cultural values while interacting with the input of external forces to appropriately utilize local human resources for the wider national and global development. Since the process is embedded within the local culture, it can be sustained by homegrown resources with the minimal or no outside support. Ultimately the successful growth of a local communities and the local knowledge system will contribute to the growth of the global communities.

In the other hand if the cultural roots and bases are not fully acknowledged and not valued, the growth of local communities will remain local and the conversion of global knowledge into local knowledge will be very limited. Furthermore, any development which may come along with the concept of globalization bound to remain superficial and unsustainable. As we argued elsewhere, one of the greatest consequences of the under-utilization of local systems is the loss of indigenous system which will result in the inefficient allocation of resources and manpower to inappropriate planning strategies which have done little to alleviate local or national poverty.

We therefore propose the following ***FIVE scenarios*** in order to provoke further thoughts and initiate debates on how best to link global and local knowledge.

Scenario No 1: “planting local seeds”

The best scenario to counter balance the unintended consequences of globalization is to “*plant local seeds*” and only then accumulate the global knowledge along a given local expectation and demand. Therefore, the aim of fostering local knowledge is to accumulate global knowledge around “local seeds” and this could be the existing local demands and values to be fulfilled. This means one have to identify and maintain the core local needs and values as the fundamental seeds to accumulate the relevant global knowledge and resources accordingly. The authors of this paper believe that in this era of globalization, understanding and valuing the wisdom of local knowledge structure should be the basic criteria before considering to entertain or accumulate the

dominant global knowledge and the education sector could be the driving force for such endeavor.

The expected educational outcome could therefore be to develop local communities who remains local with global knowledge and can act nationally with increasing global techniques. With local seeds to crystallize the global knowledge, there will be no conflict between local needs and the external knowledge to be absorbed and accumulated in the development of the strong and economically viable communities. In practice, it is easy to identify what the local communities wants or do not want from the overwhelming global inputs.

However one must not underestimate the influence of external forces that led people in developing countries to become increasingly dependent on outside expertise in the first place. It is equally important to acknowledge the fact that it may also not be easy to find a set of good *local seeds* or values that can be used to crystallize and localize the powerful global knowledge. Since the original nature and type of local seeds themselves may crystallize only those similar to themselves but not others, the knowledge to be fostered may be limited. However given the nature of one-way crystallization, there will be no clear contribution to the growth of global knowledge and communities.

Scenario No 2: Minimizing the domination of global forces

How to avoid or minimize the total domination of global forces on their opposite local communities is often one of the key issues to many people in the developing world. Perhaps the best way how to resist or counter balance this threat is to continuously foster local knowledge in the globalized education system. This scenario (i.e. *minimizing the domination of global forces*) can be open for incoming global knowledge and resources but at the same time efforts should be made to limit or converge the local development and related interactions with the outside world to a manageable number or fixed homegrown/local framework. It means that fostering local knowledge in globalized education requires a “local framework” for filtering the incoming external knowledge and safeguarding the local development from the unintended consequences of globalization.

It is therefore important to identify homegrown “local framework” with clear ideological boundaries and social norms for education/curriculum design such that for example, all educational activities can have a clear local focus when benefiting from the exposure of wide global knowledge and inputs. This means local wisdom and concerns should be a core part of any educational activity. The expected educational outcome should therefore be to develop local communities with bounded global outlook, who can act locally with filtered global knowledge.

In so doing, one can ensure local relevance in globalizing education and avoid any loss of local identity while interacting with global forces. The authors of this paper firmly believe that the “local framework” should aim to protect the local interests from over-globalization. However in practice, it may be difficult to build up appropriate cultural or social boundaries to filter the global impacts and ensure local relevance because the boundaries may be too tight and closed to stop any necessary and meaningful interactions with the outside world and limit the growth of local knowledge. However regardless of whether the local framework is accepted or not, one have to reject the temptation to the idea of knowledge transfer (KT) but instead embrace knowledge exchange (KE) when appropriate.

Scenario No 3: Transplanting global and viable knowledge

This approach places emphasis on identifying and transplanting the better key elements from the global knowledge to replace some “potentially weaker” knowledge and possibly reject some harmful cultural practices. This means the purpose of fostering local knowledge will be to mainly replace the unproductive local knowledge with the vital global knowledge through globalization or globalized education.

In globalizing education, the curriculum design should be very selective to both local and global knowledge with aims to choose the best elements from them. Therefore, the understanding of weak and strong elements in both local and global knowledge is necessary in education. Learning institutions for example, may be strongly encouraged to be open for transplanting any “good & viable elements” into local contexts. The expected educational outcome is to develop

local and national communities with locally and globally mixed elements, that can act and think with mixed local and global knowledge.

The strength of this approach is its accommodativeness to transplant valid knowledge without exerting further pressure or burden on local culture. This approach can provide an alternative to learn and improve the existing local practices and developments. However in practice, it may not be simple to easily identify a weak or strong elements and equally it may be too mechanical to assume that the transplant and replacement with goodwill can be carried out easily without any cultural imposition on smaller or large scale.

Scenario No 4: Embracing global knowledge

This approach assumes that it is faster and easier to digest and absorb certain relevant types of global knowledge for the growth of national development than to expand the local knowledge base. Therefore, the process of fostering local knowledge is to digest the types of global knowledge which are significant and relevant to local development and convert it as local lubricant for the development of the local communities.

This scenario suggests that the education system for example, could aim at enabling local communities to identify and justify for themselves why global knowledge is valuable and articulate how it can be utilized in order to support the national and local development. In globalizing national education system, the design of education activities should aim at digesting the complex global knowledge into appropriate forms that can feed the needs of local communities and their aspiration to growth. The expected educational outcome is to develop communities equipped with certain types of global knowledge, who can act based on relevant global knowledge system.

The main point of this approach is to digest and absorb the “useful elements of global knowledge” than to strengthen the local knowledge system. The roots for growth and development are based on the global knowledge instead of local innovations whether it is indigenous or not. Clearly, the process will be mainly one-way digestion and absorption of

external knowledge and thus, its contribution of the local system to the growth of the global knowledge and resources is very limited. There is no clear local identity and vision for its growth but it is bound to depend on the knowledge and resource base of external sources and this may lead to one way of knowledge diffusion which is Knowledge Transfer (i.e. from economically developed Western nations to the developing nations).

*Scenario No 5: **Total globalization***

To smaller or newer countries without strong ties to specific homegrown culture, this approach could be an option as they may not be concerned as such with conservation of local values and cultural norms. As a consequence, they may be most concerned about the adaptation to the fast-changing global environment and economic survival. Therefore, they may consider fully embracing **total globalization** as they may be able to exploit the full use of the global knowledge with minimal local constraints. This approach considers that fostering local knowledge is only a process to fully use and accumulate global knowledge in the local context. Whether the accumulated knowledge is really local or the local values can be preserved may not be a major concern.

Accordingly the curriculum design for example, could include the full range of global perspectives and knowledge to totally globalize education in order to maximize the benefit from global knowledge and become more adaptive to changing environments. Therefore, to achieve a broad international outlook and apply global knowledge either locally or globally may be crucial to the education system. Cultural burdens and local values could be minimized in the design of curriculum and instruction in order to let local communities be totally open for global learning. The expected educational outcome is for example “*to develop flexible and open communities*” who can act and think globally.

The *total globalization* approach directly or indirectly force the local communities to embrace to be completely flexible and open to all global exposure such that it will either have none or bare minimum constraints in accumulating global knowledge and resources. Then, the development of local communities will be exposed to the “advanced communities experience” via the global

forces. Of course, the strengths of this scenario are also its limitations, particularly in some culturally strong and pivotal nations like Ethiopia, China, India and others. Certainly there will be potential loss of local values and cultural identity in ancient countries; as a result local communities will potentially lose its direction and social cohesion due to the unintended consequences of the overwhelming forces of globalization. However it is very difficult to ascertain how the local communities can sustain their own livelihood and it is also difficult to predict the contribution of local communities to the national and international development.

Summarizing the FIVE scenarios

Each of the above five scenarios have their own strengths and limitations to implement in different countries across different continent as each communities and the context they live in are different. It is therefore difficult to pick one or two scenarios or approaches and to say these are better than the others. However, the aforementioned FIVE scenarios can provide an opportunity for policy-makers, educators and researchers to consider, conceptualize and implement a viable human resources strategy by weighing the advantages and disadvantages of localization and globalization in order to ultimately strengthen their local knowledge base and achieve the desired development. Given the diversity and complexity of each country or local communities, it may be appropriate to consider combining multiple of scenarios to foster local knowledge and local know-hows. From the above scenarios therefore we can ascertain that appropriately fostering local knowledge and human development in the global era could contribute to the pool of global knowledge system.

Conclusion

Given the increasing international concerns about the impacts of globalization on local communities, how to manage the realities and practices of globalization and localization in education for maximizing the benefits whilst minimizing the disadvantages for the development local communities inevitably becomes a major concern – especially for developing countries. After digesting the related scenarios of localized and globalized knowledge system in a context of globalization, in this paper we attempted to address these key concerns as FIVE different scenarios.

These scenarios have varied emphasis on global dependence and local orientation and therefore they may have their own strengths, and limitations in conceptualizing and managing the process of fostering local knowledge. Clearly, their implications for design of curriculum and instruction and their expected educational outcomes in globalization of education are correspondingly different. We believe that the above FIVE scenarios provide different approaches how best to foster local or global knowledge in the context of developing nations.

It may be obvious that each countries or local communities may have their own unique social, economic and cultural contexts and therefore, its tendency to use one scenario or a combination of scenarios in globalizing education may be different from that of others. It is therefore difficult to say one is scenario or better than the other. We may for example consider that *Scenarios No. 1, 2 and 3* may be more preferred in some culturally rich and ancient countries like Ethiopia, China, India and Japan.

At the same time, for those countries with less cultural ties or local values, one may suggest that the *Scenarios No. 4 and 5* may be more appropriate choices for development. However, we hope the above FIVE scenarios can provide a wide spectrum of alternatives for policy-makers and educators to conceptualize and formulate appropriate strategies which are suitable for each countries concerned in order to foster local knowledge and human resources for local, national and global development.

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