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GLOBALISATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The world is fast changing into a global village with advanced technology brought in to "facilitate" and "complicate" human day-to-day life. In Nigeria, and as far as child development is concerned, globalisation is widening the gap between children in enlightened homes who may be living in urban areas and those living in rural areas. Parents no longer seem to be in control of what their children are exposed to. With the above, this paper examines the tenets of globalisation especially as it affects child development in Nigeria. It highlights inherent benefits and dangers. Recommendations are given to ensure optimal child development which will ensure a virile future society for Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In every human action, the consideration has been the succeeding generation. This is largely so because the child who is the representation of the next generation needs proper training if the succeeding generations must be reliable. It is estimated that the child is born naïve and without any knowledge. Parents and others in the wider society consider it a duty to inculcate acceptable norms and values in the growing child. In fact, the state (the government) for such reasons pays special attention to education especially of the young through its education policies. There is therefore need to consider every new development in the society as it affects the assurance of a virile future generation. With the emerging trend in new world order, the questions which arise are: How does globalisation promote the ideals of child rearing practice of the Nigerian society? How does it assure confidence that the succeeding generation would be dependable or in short, what are the implications of globalisation and its related developments on child development in terms of its benefits and dangers. To be able to address these questions, this paper would attempt to define globalisation and bring to the fore the contemporary societal practices which come as a result of globalisation. It will examine the average Nigerian mode of life as far as child rearing and livelihood are concerned. It will attempt to consider the benefits and dangers weighing the former and the latter, that is, one against the other to see whether there is any desirability for the effect of globalisation on the basis of which recommendations would be made.

THE CONCEPT OF GLOBALISATION

Globalisation is easier described than defined. This is so because globalisation is still unfolding with divergent considerations depending on the country in question and the angle through which one looks at it. But from whichever angle one looks at it, it involves the idea of internationalisation, liberalisation and universalisation of relations, goods and services. This idea considers globalisation as essentially an economic term.

Beyond this, globalisation is seen as the intensification of world wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (Labodo, 2003). Kahyana (2004), quoting Randal and Theobald (2001), defines globalisation as the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation-states and by implication the societies. For this level of interconnection among societies, nations and people to take place, there has to be media which promote the process. These include: the television, internet, telephone and microchip. As observed in Awake (2002) globalisation is severally appreciated by some who condemn it as the mother of the world's ills, while others hail it as the panacea for most of the world's problems.

THE NIGERIAN LIFESTYLE AND CHILD REARING APPROACH

Globalisation has no doubt brought about diverse transformations in African societies and cultures. Associated with the process have been changes in living conditions both positively and negatively. Threats to sustainable livelihood practices have also increased, as gaps between the rich and poor have widened. In contemporary Nigeria, the child is born to very busy parents. Children hardly have enough parenting owing to what Obinaju (2000) terms the major changes in Nigerian family setting. In the discussion, she observes that in comparison with the past, the extended family system has collapsed with the effect that the ever present influence of the adult hitherto enjoyed in child development has also gone with it. Parents owing to depressed economy spend a long time outside the home working in an attempt to earn enough income for family needs. Odotei (2001) observes that longer working hours, consequent stress and role conflicts characterise the daily life of women (mothers). House help syndrome is fast being phased out owing to the conspiracy between the campaign against child labour, trafficking and the depressed economy which allows the average family to afford barely enough for family members and no more.

The situation described above, deprives the child the opportunity of

adequate parenting which Obinaju (1990) opines would permit the child's activities to be supervised. "He is brought up in an atmosphere where parents leave home early and come home late each day. In fact, the contemporary Nigerian child hardly spends up to 4 wake hours with his parents." (Obinaju, 2000:133)

As observed by Cox (1996), the child needs a positive self-concept to be able to perform highly in his academics. This positive self-concept is essentially developed with adequate parental presence.

Many children get ready, go to school and come back home unsupervised. Such children therefore leave home when they are able to and get back also when they are able to. Peer group influence could divert their attention to some other activities before getting home such that their concern would only be to get home before their parents return. There is, of course, no way of finding out what their activities were during the hours when parents were absent. Ekpo (1996) judges that juvenile delinquency and truancy is on the increase and perhaps this attitude takes its stem from decreased supervision of children's activities.

Parents on their own part always come home tired such that even if the physical presence of the parents is achieved, it is to no effect as the parents would prefer to be away from locations where the children are or they would just be sleeping. In effect, there is reduced adult supervision of children's activities in contemporary Nigerian society.

IMPLICATIONS OF GLOBALISATION ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Taking the unfolding scenario of globalisation and judging it against child development opportunities, it is clear that there are some benefits as well as demerits. The merits are not far fetched. Children from very tender ages are seen unaccompanied in cyber cafes. They have learnt how to operate computer and search for information from the Internet. This is a positive departure from their parents' times. As a result, they can access a wide range of materials from the Internet on their own. The cost of these materials, where they are academically relevant is surely minimal when compared to buying hard bound books for the same purpose. Some of these children are readily employed either on part-time or full-time basis on account of their computer literate status. In another consideration, the advanced technology which promotes globalisation brings about fast communication such that happenings in one part of the world are communicated within split seconds to other parts of the world. This singular phenomenon keeps the child well informed beyond the bounds of his physical environment.

Beyond these advances, there are dangers which globalisation has exposed Nigerian children to. In the first place, parents whose responsibility it

is to provide supervision to children's activities (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 and the Child Rights Act of 2003) can no longer exercise effective control over their children. Children these days obtain information which neither passes through the scrutiny of the parents nor of the school to which the parents entrust their care. The effect is that children's behaviour can no longer be predicted not even from information got from the parents.

In some cases children are exposed to pornography which in many cultures is a taboo for the young minds. Highly rated intrigues, violence and crimes which ordinarily could have been above the imagination of the child at his level of development are exposed to him. The child therefore starts at a very early stage to imbibe a culture of violence, crime and measures of wriggling out of it. Or, how would one explain a situation whereby a cell-phone is used to text answers to objective question from one candidate to another within examination halls. These are some of the side effects of globalisation and agencies of globalisation.

Learning in Nigeria is organised through group instruction especially at the primary and secondary school levels. A situation where some people have been exposed to certain sets of information and others have not, simply widens the gap between the learners in the class and makes teaching very ineffective. It is however agreed that in such a situation, individualised instructions should be used. The basic questions which arise are: How many teachers in the system can effectively use the method of individualised instruction? Does the system provide for individualised instruction? Moreover, within the same country, the gap between the attainments of the urban child who has benefited from the technological advancement would be further widened from the rural child who may not have had the same opportunity.

Through the Internet, television and the like, children get acquainted to scenes, music and celebrations all around the globe. The tendency is for them to align with modes of dressing, behaviours and performances they have observed. This in itself de-routes children from their indigenous culture and places them in a desire for foreign tastes. This runs contrary to the provision of the National Policy on Education as it concerns citizenship education.

From the foregone discussion it can be observed that globalisation on its own is desirable but its effect on children is very disastrous especially given the nature of family life prevalent in the country at present. It therefore behoves on us to device means of reducing the negative tendencies of this phenomenon on the child his optimal development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Globalisation has released a wind of discovery which is irresistible on the Nigerian society. The positive effects are desirous for economic growth of the country but the negative effects on the development of our children must be checked. To this end, it is

recommended that adequate supervision be given to our children. For this to be possible, boarding schools have to be reintroduced into the country such that what children experience are under some control until they come of age. Otherwise, the policy where only one parent is allowed to work full-time would also help as the other parent would be allowed time to give the needed supervision to the child's activities while he is not in school. Furthermore, expanded counselling services should be entered into by the government, non-governmental and faith-based organisations so as to give guidance to the young malleable minds of children. In these ways the effect of globalisation would not be so disastrous on children.

CONCLUSION

This paper has been able to define globalisation with its shadows on a developing country like Nigeria. The lifestyle of a typical Nigerian family has been x-rayed. It has been essentially seen that although globalisation has had some positive influences on Nigerian children, its negative effects especially when children's activities remain unsupervised become pronounced. It has been recommended that since globalisation cannot be stopped, children should at least be properly supervised so that the positive effects of globalisation would be reaped and the negative effect minimised. With this action, globalisation would yield positive effects on Nigerian children rather than the opposite.

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