

# Globalization and Modernization An overview of the Impacts on the African Culture

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**Abstract:** Globalization encompasses the extension of culture outwards. This is to the limit, which is referred to as the global culture. Globalization is the process through which cultures have become incorporated and integrated into one dominant culture. The emergence of the globalization has been attributed to the vast development in technology and the rapid growth of state economies. Modernization is viewed as being the static, fixed and closed need to deal with disorder. This paper reviews the existing literature on the extent to which the tools of globalization and modernization have had an impact on the African culture. This paper will also highlight the perspectives that concern the extent to which globalization and modernization tools have promoted cultural development and as to whether this has led to the displacement of indigenous cultural values and practices.

**Keywords:** Globalization, modernization, culture, global society, local culture.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Culture has in the decades gained a significant role within the social life of individuals and groups (Baudrillard, 1993). At the present much of everything has been associated with being cultural. Today culture is about the economic life, social class, gender, religion and ethnicity of individuals and groups. Culture is holistic, it is learned, it is dynamic and it is ethnocentric.

Globalization is explained in relation to its fundamental shift presented among countries as they are moving towards a world in which barriers linked to cross border trade, investments, culture, government regulations as well as business systems are diminishing and national economies joining forces into independent global economic systems. Ideally, the national economies have been relatively self-contained entities in the fact that they tend to be isolated from each other by barriers hence limiting the aspect of productivity, efficiency and competitiveness (Hill, 2005).

Globalization is basically the larger perspective of what modernization is. With the fast pace of modernization, cultures are being fragmented. There is no definite time or date when Globalization began. Some researchers argue that it is the modern age that has led globalization. Historians say that it is the industrial revolution of the 1800 and the growth of infrastructure connectivity has led to many states interacting and sharing of cultural differences.

African culture is facing a lot of challenges due to the effects created by globalization and modernization. There has been a large shift and erosion of what was formerly the traditional African culture to the modern African culture which has largely been influenced by western ideologies. This does not necessarily declare doom on the African culture considering the fact that there are customs and traditions that are still being observed and that in the world, there are 6800 languages spoken, and out of this 2400 languages are in Africa.

## 2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

### **Globalization Theory:**

Globalization is viewed as the push towards change and chaos. Globalization in itself is a process of conquest and unification of the global space where the world becomes a singular domesticated place (Tenbruck, 1990). Localism can best define globalization as there has been a shift in polarity from the West. Localism defines the world as a singular space both economically and socially.

The change in global status as a result of the process of globalization has led the Western countries to react. The reaction experienced is what has been referred to as modernization.

Giddens (1997), defines globalization as the process of modernization of the world system through institutions. He therefore sees globalization as a global economy that is dominated by transnational firms, MNCs and financial institutions operating independently. This in turn has led to the integration of national economies. Globalization has also been linked to culture in working towards advancing and increasing the interaction of countries in the world as well as individuals through various changes observed in technological advancements, communication, knowledge and skills and the interaction of cultural values, systems and practices.

From another perspective globalization, is viewed as a social integration process from the individual to the tribal groups to a nation state approach, to the larger bloc approach and finally to a world state society. Cultures have been compressed as per this perspective and no thought has been given of each culture's principles.

### **Modernization Theory:**

Modernization is the push towards increasing order. The basis of the modernization process within this theory concentrates on economic growth and also various changes that are identified in the values and systems of the populations in the society. These changes are influenced by the economic aspects and have strong supports from the transformations in the political and social sectors (Harrison, 1998).

Modernization theory tries to explain post modernism as the shift from Europeanization to Americanization. From a liberal perspective, modernity is the production of order but as human beings there has always been the inability to complete the entire process (Zygmunt, 1991).

Post modernism has been viewed as the expansion of industrial capitalism, the development of human rights and the approach to what was defined as proper state administration. With modernization, saw the spread of the Western ideology of democracy and the promotion of the liberal idealism.

## 3. THE IMPACT CREATED BY THE TOOLS OF GLOBALIZATION AND MODERNIZATION ON THE AFRICAN CULTURE

The paper seeks to point out the impacts globalization and modernization have had on the African culture. This will be carried out with specific reference to Information and Communication technologies (ICT), Multinational Corporations (MNCs), International Organizations and the changes experienced in educational levels, which as per the paper are viewed as the tools that drive the process of globalization and modernization. The paper also aims at showing the link between globalization and culture and how these tools have channeled effective and efficient strategies towards realization of the global culture. Before the paper concludes it was key to highlight the impacts the processes of globalization and modernization have had on the institutions of marriage and family as per the African culture. It is also important to identify whether globalization and modernization have the capacity to ideally develop the local cultures or rather work towards eradication and destruction of the local cultural values.

### **Information, Communication and Technology:**

The implications of globalization influenced by ICTs are present in the African societies and have raised interesting debates and also posed challenges to various scholars and researchers who discuss and point out issues on cultural traditions as well as the media aspects of communication as a whole. Gilbert (2008), articulates some of the issues across Africa and the West in relation to cultural imperialism and the need to establish practices and systems that eliminate negative ideologies and promote cultural diversity and development.

On the other hand, the positive impacts of globalization on culture are emphasized in the introduction of a global village whereby people are able to share skills and knowledge aimed at fostering economic, social and political progress.

Information and communication technologies continue to influence people's lifestyles. According to several ICT specialists in Kenya, democracy has been realized through ICT though the influences tend to be limited. Apart from enabling individuals to gain information and share ideas, the ICT sector has led to issues of manipulation especially to people who are not able to have access to information beforehand hence not able to make decisions. When marginalized people in the rural or urban areas access internet then democracy is instilled as they are the majority group in the society. Effects of social media should thus look at both the people's actions and socioeconomic context influencing certain behaviors' (Rensburg, 2012). Web 2.0 social media sites post questions on the existing power structures hence power is considered not to be situated in any specific actor but rather can be seen as a circulation among participants.

The networking sites such as Facebook and Myspace are therefore not limited to networking but can also work as forums for political debates among others. Social networking sites in this case can hence turn into platforms for discussion of civic ideas and organization of protests. There have been advances in technology and according to market and investments that will fall into place in the next ten years, there is a high possibility that the fiber optic technology in the form of phone lines in transmission of light instead of electricity will basically enable the individuals to transmit wholesome amount of information across and within the ultra-thin cables (Thompson, 2008).

Using social media sites like Twitter and Facebook on matters of advancing political aspirations has been debated on various aspects. This is discussed in terms of the impact on social media on protests in causing public attention, evading censorship and also generating logistics and coordination. This has included the capacity to reveal events that were not accessible or rather hidden from the public.

Through the media platforms, people are able to report on events in real time hence proper stability and coordination is observed. People are also able to be reached both at domestic and global level by use of social media platforms. In cases of political unrests, Facebook can be used as a safe platform to exchange ideas or pass important information. The use of different social media sites ensures that the communication network is effective and efficient thus extremely hard to break (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011).

In as much as the social media is used to satisfy different kinds of needs, 57.7% of the world's population does not have access to the internet according to internet world statistics in 2014. The internet penetration in a country like Kenya is stated to be higher in comparison to the world's average and the gap between the rich and poor is decreasing on stable trends despite there being inequality on a great level on access to the new media (Zadja, Biraimah & Gaudelli, 2008).

According to Yu, Frederick (1977), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended a minimum mass target for the developing countries at large. According to UNESCO, countries in this case should work towards provision for every 100 of its inhabitants at least 10 copies of newspapers on a daily basis, 5 radio receivers, 2 cinema seats and 12 television receivers. The assumption to this aspect is that mass media messages reach all segments of the society and when messages are received they will impact to the greater population as intended by mass media.

### **Multinational Corporations (MNCs):**

MNCs have sparked cultural homogenization, cultural polarization and cultural hybridization. Cultural polarization arises when the impact of culture can cultivate hatred towards a specific country. Consumer culture is currently what seems to be defining social interactions. This is due to the exportation of industries and businesses, commonly referred to as MNCs. With the fast pace of economic growth of countries, cultures are exported and hence intercultural relations are on the rise.

Featherstone (1991), states that Americanization is a form of global culture. Americanization is where, America through its economic (MNCs) and political dominance (democratic ideologies) thrust its hegemonic culture into the rest of the world. The Chinese culture is one which is of a conservative nature and as part of its foreign policy, has seen the maintenance of their culture. In the past few years things have changed favoring the Chinese culture. With a very high population- through economic integration, educational scholarships and political power, China has managed to spread its cultural practices around the globe.

MNCs are in the business to make money and profits. Grubel (1981), states that MNCs provide opportunities for employment, growth, tax, technical skills revenue and technological know-how. With the spread of MNCs operating locally in the society, there has been a push to adopt foreign languages. This has been due to the fact that most MNCs hire individuals that can communicate in their language hence, African countries are rapidly losing their cultural identity. Through losing their cultural identity, there has been a trend of the adoption of borrowing aspects of other cultures.

Through globalization the world is becoming a common society and in the international arena, politics are playing a very big role. Power polarity is shifting from the western ideologies and more cultures are taking part in global politics. Oyejide (1998), identifies that the most important consequence of the rise of MNCs in Africa, has been the erosion of sovereignty especially on economic and financial matters.

### **International Organizations:**

International organizations are organizations with an international membership, scope, or presence. The development of international organizations has been a response to the evident need arising from international interactions rather than to the philosophical or ideological appeal of the notion of world government (Tilahun, 2012).

International organizations have spread throughout the African continent such that there is hardly any human activity which is not, to some extent, governed by the work of an international organization (Tilahun, 2012). International organizations come to the African continent for the purpose of promoting education, political activism, human rights and economic equality.

International organizations however have been seen to bring about both negative and positive changes. In terms of human rights, a positive effect of international organizations is that cultural practices like female circumcision are no longer being practiced as it has been termed as a practice that is both barbaric and crude. This tradition was practiced as a form of initiation of girls to womanhood. Some African countries like Somalia have taken offence to the women activists demand made to halt this practice, while other countries have embraced it and indeed found the practice necessary.

International organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, United Nations and World Trade Organization have made steps in making decisions that are binding on African countries. The World Bank and IMF attach strict conditions to their loans, which give them great control over borrower governments. This could be deemed as eroding the sovereignty and power of the African states (Ibrahim, 2013). The World Bank and IMF have forced African countries to adopt “structural adjustment programs” (SAP) and other measures which cut back government spending on basic services They have required African governments to reduce trade barriers and open their markets, maintaining their economies as sources of cheap raw materials and cheap labor for multinational corporations. The policies of the World Bank and IMF have been publicly criticized for the negative impact they have had on the economies of African countries.

### **Educational Levels:**

**Education:** The act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life.

**Education policies:** The collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of education systems.

- Education is universally acclaimed as the key to sustainable development and advancement of human welfare - It has helped develop workforce productivity and triggered economic take-off.

Western education in Africa was initiated by the missionaries during the colonial era and shortly after independence and is a victim of circumstances. Autonomous African universities at inception (1960s) expanded as a result of local and international supports. Interlinkages were forged with USAID, Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, Carnegie Corporation and UNESCO. - They all made commitments to help African universities.

There were interactions – staff exchange, regular annual conferences and fellowships tenable in the UK and U.S for the conduct of research. African universities then, were of international repute.

The pulls and pressures of globalization have affected education policies.

- As a result of the Structures Adjustment Programmes, African countries are in debt and poverty partly due to the policies of international institutions such as IMF and WTO. Debt repayment pushed governments to embark on processes that saw crucial aspects of life neglected. Such as Education, health and agriculture.
- There has been economic underdevelopment due to IMF causing more youths to remain uneducated, schools underfunded, teachers make less and Education for the rich.
- Privatization and growing inequality where private schools and studying abroad is left for the rich as not all could afford.

The greatest destabilizing influence on globalization is the global knowledge economy. Australia, Canada, EU members' open recruitment offices in Africa while the graduates from Africa seek employment abroad. Globalization of labor markets has accelerated the brain drain - with a very large proportion of highly educated individuals emigrating from less developing countries.

With the flow of people, students, intellectuals, African talented brains migrated to other places where brains were attracted to education, research and development, ICT, new innovations for their market and workforce. There is a growing concern about the possibility that the poor, in particular in least developed countries, be suffering instead of benefiting from globalization (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, 2004).

Education policies have been a key ingredient in the take-off of countries that are nowadays considered as emerging economies, which subsequently led them to become major players in the global economy, and winners in the globalization process. Emerging economies started growing in the 1960s when a majority of their workforce had been granted primary education. This proportion has barely been reached nowadays in many LDCs, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Inefficient and inequitable education policies can contribute to the poor performance of a country, more than the shortage of resources. In most countries, investments in primary education have been insufficient, compared to the resources invested in higher levels of education.

Over the last two decades, countries around the globe have been focused on expanding education as the key to maximizing individual well-being, reducing poverty, and increasing economic growth. Under the Education for All initiative, one of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, nations had joined together with the goal of providing universal primary education in every country, especially the poorest countries, by 2015. Although there is still a long way to go to meet this goal, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, among girls, and in war-torn areas, more than 33 million children were added to school rolls between 2000 and 2008 (UNESCO, 2010). Countries in the middle tier of economic development aspire to universal secondary school graduation. And the most developed countries have set the goal of greatly increased levels of college attendance.

Because of dramatic global educational gains, high school graduation has now become the norm in most industrialized countries. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports that by 2009, the United States had fallen from 1st in the world to 8th in the proportion of young adults (ages 18 to 24) receiving a high school diploma within the calendar year. This lower position does not indicate a drop in U.S. graduation levels; rather, it testifies to the success other nations have had ambitiously expanding their secondary school systems and raising their graduation rates.

In developing countries that have been able to emerge over the past half century, education has always played a major role. It has helped develop workforce productivity and triggered economic take-off. Countries that had been able to emerge in this way before the globalization process have been among the principal winners of this process. Comparatively, countries that stagnated, at least in part due to inadequate education policies, in the 1950 to 1970 decades, have generally been unable to benefit from globalization.

Moreover, the poor uneducated individuals are, in LDCs, among those who suffer the most in globalization, notably because they are usually not engaged in tradable activities. Conversely, the globalization of labor markets has accelerated the brain drain, with a very large proportion of highly educated individuals emigrating from LDCs. Education policies need to be reformed not only in quantitative terms, but also qualitatively. One striking characteristic of education policies implemented in most African countries, in particular, is that they are not based on strong priorities related to any of the main objectives of the Jomtien declaration on 'education for all'. Their education policies are poorly adapted to answer the challenges created by globalization, regarding both economic competition and the competition of cultures. Reforming

education policies in LDCs is the sole responsibility of their governments. Although they are resource poor, what is usually lacking is less budgetary means than political will. Poor performances in the education sector are often linked to governance issues, and are reflected in the absence of any strong development objective in education policy orientations.

### **African Marriages and Family as an Institution Affected by the Process of Globalization and Modernization**

In the traditional African culture, marriage was a rite of passage whereby girls were married off at a tender age to boys their age or as an additional wives to older men. Through marriage, one would procreate expanding his and her family. Procreation was regarded as a symbol of wealth.

Sex before marriage was discouraged as it did not serve the purpose of parenthood and matrimony while adultery was an offense punishable by the community (Wandibba, n.d). A family consisted of a man, his wife and children and the extended family who lived in unity and helped each other on their farms or grazing their animals and also gave support when needed. This would also extend to the neighbors and people of the same clan (Yankuzo, 2013). Polygamous marriages were dominant due to the notion of the male population being lower than that of the females.

Children marriages were arranged by parents without consent from the child being married off. In much of African countries, the child bearing age tends to begin early and stretches to the end of the reproductive age of a woman. People perceived that women in the traditional African culture were only child bearing tools and domestic workers. Women were not allowed in decision making and policies panel. However, in some African countries women were regarded as queens in societies like those found in Egypt, Rwanda and Ghana hence giving them political authority. They played a major role in public policy and royal decision making (Kasongo, 2010).

In the modern day, the age at which a woman gets married is quite different from that of the past. African women seem to focus more on their career growth and seeking positions in the political systems of a state while reserving marriage and family for an older age or even choosing to completely disregard marriage. The introduction of Christianity into the African culture has greatly affected polygamy in marriage. This is due to the fact that Christianity advocates for one woman one man in marriage.

The process of globalization has created a global society. This has largely contributed to the rise of cross border marriages as young women living in under developed countries look for men online not factoring in their age or physical appearance with the hope to secure a better future. Bride trade is carried out through dating websites and Ex Afro introductions. There are people who have used such dating platform to traffic young girls with the hope of getting married to rich white men but on arrival are used as sexual workers, unpaid domestic workers and sweatshops (IAFN, 2008).

In modern times, people no longer instill primary values to their children as practiced in the past. Parents can have up to three jobs a day dragging into late nights therefore lack time with their children. Internet becomes their teacher. A child most likely will comprehend that whatever they learn online is the way to live therefore adopting values that did not exist in the African tradition culture. These include attributes such as gay marriages and bearing a child outside wedlock. Traditionally, Africans would pass their values through stories, myths, oral history and legends. Conflict arising among family members would be resolved by council of elders who were believed to be very wise and experienced (Kasongo, 2010).

Migration of people in search of jobs abroad strains on the family as they have to split. It may force women to leave behind their children to be raised by friends, extended family members or even the elderly. Migration of people can have a positive impact to the home country which earns foreign currency through the large amount of funds sent to their families.

As much as globalization has created opportunities for people to find jobs beyond their borders, fraudsters who parade as middlemen to jobs have over the years conned a lot of unsuspecting people. It also creates opportunities for children and women trafficking who end up being trapped in foreign countries.

Lesbian, gay, Bisexual and transgender (LGBT) is a modern sexual choice which was not present in African tradition families. The West advocates for LGBT rights whereas some African countries are out rightly against it Ex: Uganda which passed a law to arrest and prosecute anyone practicing the act and some are reluctant to abide by it. President Robert Mugabe in his speech warns Africa against adopting the western values that are not coherent to African way of life.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The globalization aspect has generally led to inequalities among nations in general. The richest of nations continue to increase their wealth while poor nations continue to be poorer. 20% of the world's richest population control 86% of the gross domestic product of the world and 82% of export products while the poor 20% consume, 1.3% (Herriott & Jackson, 2002).

The development of ICT, the spread of international organizations and the spread of MNCs has not only made changes to the communication, activism and labor fields but also impacted on the societies and culture all over Africa and the rest of the world. African countries like Kenya, have diversified on media aspects as it is clear that the youth and young adults have embraced the digital platforms thus fostering better sharing of ideas and knowledge aimed at development and progress within the societies. This is to try and cope with the fast pace of the spread of globalization.

On the other hand various challenges have been identified on the information and communication sector in relation to globalization trends and cultural dimensions as well. Various organizations and institutions should work towards establishing policies and systems that articulate issues on marginalization as well as try to reduce barriers and gaps between the rich and poor by ensuring equal access to participation, education, socio—economic activities and civic engagements.

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