

**Living in a world of interdependence, interconnectedness and cultural diversity:
The need to globalize the curriculum.**

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Abstract

The issue of interdependence, interconnectedness and cultural diversity has not been under much challenge until recently when there is urgency in the need to globalize the curriculum. Globalisation has placed lot of demand on schools to teach students to seek unique and creative solutions to solving problems. Unless the curriculum in Fiji is aligned to the changing need and demands of the society, the nation and the whole world the students will continue to lack the knowledge, skills and attitudes to fit in this globalized world.

This article looks at how curriculum development has progressed in Fiji and through literature review briefs the change influenced by the effects of globalization. It concludes supporting globalizing the curriculum as a means of preparing the individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills and values for their survival in the future.

Introduction

While there is urgency to the need for schools to reconsider what knowledge, skills and pedagogies they should focus on into the future, the curriculum that is presently being used is not appropriate for the global economy. Zinser (2012), states that the foundation for educating the global citizens of the future is certainly idealistic, but nothing is more practical than preparing young people for a healthy and peaceful world.

The students should be prepared towards the transformation in the nature of work which itself requires more flexibility and mobility, the importance of communication skills, the necessity for teamwork and the increasing use of new technologies. Kemmis (1990) stated that curricula reveal how nations and states interpret themselves and how they want to be interpreted. Debates about curriculum reveal the fundamental concerns, uncertainties and tensions which preoccupy nations and states as they struggle to adapt to the changing needs.

There is evidence that schools have sometimes been reluctant to re-appraise and re-consider whether the curriculum does meet the needs of all students and face the realities of new times (Edwards and Tudball, 2002). The students should be empowered with greater understanding about the interdependency of the world. Cogan (2001) states:

the planet and the human family are facing an unprecedented set of challenges, issues and problems ... the globalisation of the economy and growing economic disparities; a rapid deterioration in the quality of the global environment; inequities regarding access to and use of information technologies;... increasing levels of consumerism...; and a multitude of other ethical and social issues.

It's a fact we all are encircled by issues of poverty, development, human rights, social justice, environmental challenges, peace and conflict. The curriculum should include approaches which sees the interconnectedness and fosters knowledge, skills and values that will equip the students to engage themselves in building solutions. The world council for curriculum and instruction state that:

as members of world community, educators have a responsibility to ensure that education contributes to the promotion of equity, peace, social justice and the universal realization of human rights. ... curricular and instructional programs ... should aim to develop in every person self-respect, social awareness, and the capacity to participate at all levels of world society, from local to global.

Unless we align our curriculum to global needs we will not be able to produce effective and efficient individuals who would possess values, skills, and knowledge in order to survive in this multifaceted world affected by globalisation.

Background

Much has been debated about the status of school curriculum in Fiji. While there has been a call to modify the curriculum there is documented evidence supporting the need for change. This evidence includes international conventions and regional educational goals as documented in the conventions of the rights of the child and the Millennium Development goals. The Fiji islands is committed to this. However, while the 2000 Education Commission report stated that the present curriculum is irrelevant and does not cater for the global economy, thirteen years has lapsed and not much progress has been made.

The Vice Chancellor of Fiji National University, Dr Ganesh Chand while speaking at the 83rd Fiji Teachers Union in Lautoka in May, 2012 stated that Fiji's education curriculum must keep up with global demands. He said that the greatest demand for Fiji's education system was whether the school curriculum had kept pace with the rapidly evolving global economy.

He further stated:

“Unless the curriculum in the education system keeps pace with changes both internationally and domestically, I don't think we will be able to produce students and teachers who will be able to fit into society to higher stages of development”.

In order for the curriculum to keep pace with both local and international developments it is vital that curriculum globalize to meet the changing needs of the students and the society as a whole

Education in Fiji

Education in Fiji began with the arrival of the missionaries who set up a very informal education system whereby reading and arithmetic were the features of the basic curriculum. The objective of such an education system was essentially to have a core group of students read and interpret the bible and to act as evangelists, spreading god's message to the locals.

The missionaries set up mission schools beginning with primary level and extending later to secondary schools in Fiji. Also part of the system was a strong technical and vocational component, the continuation of which we see forming the basis of technical education in the country today.

In 1916, the first Education Department was positioned in Fiji to undertake the provision of all educational services in the country. The department registered all schools and centralized all educational services from curriculum to the recruitment of teachers.

However, one of the most significant aspects of education not centralized was the ownership of schools, which was left with the communities and other controlling authorities. This has been recognized worldwide as strength of the education system in Fiji. Often in the face of economic hardships and adversities, communities dedicate significant human and physical resources to raise funds in the name of educating the young people of the beloved nation.

Currently there are 721 primary schools in Fiji which are mostly owned and managed by non government organizations such as religious groups and community groups. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the administration and management of education policy and delivery of education services. It provides the curriculum through its curriculum development unit.

The curriculum development process in Fiji

The traditional education existed in Fiji before the introduction of formal education by the Christian missionaries. This education was associated with the continuity and maintenance of the community. It involved the whole society, where the tradition largely determined what was taught and learned. Learning was organized in a pragmatic and a practical manner. Its outcomes were easily noticed in terms of the acquisition of food and other essential materials and controls for the family, and the expression of acceptable attitudes, values and behavior for community survival.

The concept of schooling in Fiji was introduced by the Christian missionaries in the early 19th century. Their curriculum was primarily concerned with transforming the society through the use of the principles of Christianity. This was the start of the formal education system in Fiji, with an externally imposed curriculum. In such a structure of education, the community did not contribute in curriculum development and the foundations were laid for the emergence of an

academic focus in schooling, and the 'centre-periphery model' of curriculum development. This positioned power firmly within the grapple of those who took curriculum decisions.

Today the Curriculum Development Unit takes full control of the development of the curriculum in the Fiji Islands engaging centre- periphery approach in its development while teachers have been vested with the responsibility to implement the changes desired from the Ministry of Education.

Schools and society

The education system is closely tied to the institutional network of society. To understand how the content of schooling is shaped in any society, we must understand the relationship between education and other institutions that exist in the society. In other words, to understand what is taught, how it is taught and why it is taught, we need to look at the social forces that gives shape to the curriculum. When designing curriculum, the following questions must be addressed:

- To what extent should curriculum consider the world outside of school?
- How do changes in society affect curriculum?

A curriculum should be able to prepare students for the present as well as guide towards the future. McNeil (1995) states that the curriculum should address the wants and needs of learners by responding to social conditions locally, nationally and globally

The forces of globalization

The vastness of global challenges, rapid expansion of knowledge, and the complexity of issues in the contemporary world urges schools to generate opportunities for young people to transform (Tudball, 2005). The curriculum has become a crucial component of schooling because it

is seen as the means through which nation states are able to adjust their education systems to meet changing demands and preferences (Dale, 2008). It has been the key means through which national mandates for education are articulated and given substance.

Tudball (2005) states that the topics that arise from the intersection of personal and social concerns and the associated skills and knowledge form the basis of curriculum. The commonly negotiated themes in classrooms are interdependence amongst people, environmental problems, political process and structures, and the place and expectations of the current technologies.

The need to globalize the curriculum

All students are affected by the realities of globalization. As a result they must be empowered with better understanding of the world. Globalisation itself demands that schools teach students to seek unique and creative solutions towards solving problems. The curricula of the school in the Western societies- not all, not everywhere, but most remain the curricula of the nineteenth century school. That curricula had developed to serve the needs of the nineteenth century nation state- with its desire for a homogeneously conceived citizen for that state, a citizen who was 'French', or 'Germany' or 'British' and the need for a labour force and the professions- of the economy of that state (Kress, 2000). Cogan (2001) states that the citizens of the future will see themselves as members of several overlapping communities- local, regional, national and multinational. Kress (2006) states;

With globalization there is a need to produce individuals who look at problems globally, have the ability to work cooperatively, think in critical and systematic ways, are willing to change their life style and consumption habits to protect the environment and are fully able to use ICT tools. The change in social and economic circumstances which characterize the

present period, make it essential to rethink the relation of curriculum, its purpose and shapes, to the social and economic environment of the near future

One has to think about the outline of the future prior to beginning to think about the shape of curriculum for that future. The presently existing curriculum still assumes that it is educating young people into older dispositions, whereas the coming era demands an education for instability (Kress, 2000). Because the world is fast becoming one common society- a “global village”- global education should be part of curriculum in every school (Hendrix, 1998). Since technology and globalization are transforming the world into one, interconnected society, a new set of skills – in fact, a new education – is needed for future citizens (Zincer, 2012).

What should the global curriculum include?

The fundamental aim of all education remains constant: to provide those skills, knowledge, aptitudes and dispositions which would allow the young who are experiencing that curriculum to lead productive lives in their societies of their adult life. (Kress, 2000)

Zincer (2012) states:

The education of future citizens is of critical importance and will certainly be a significant part of the imminent world society. Although the pace and scope of change makes predicting the future complex and uncertain, there are foundation skills and process skills that will be needed for whatever scenario comes about. Meeting these challenges is no doubt a complicated and long-term process, which puts educators in a unique position to influence the next generation that will assume much of the responsibility.

In a progressive view of curriculum development, substantive essence of the curriculum is not predetermined but arises from an open inquiry process and the key content is based on contemporary issues (Cope and Kalantsis, 1997). Tudball (2007) proposes that the core question for schools to consider in determining the content of their curriculum is what knowledge, skills and understanding the young people need now and in the coming decades of their lives.

The curricula in any locality must be aligned to the global demands; what is taught and how it is taught will need to take the globe not just as a significant but as a necessary domain of thinking and practice. What is clear is that the new circumstances demand a response: new goals and new curricula which are appropriate to these new goals (Kress, 2000).

Conclusion

There is tremendous pressure on the necessity to change the curriculum in Fiji. While globalization has elicited greater interdependence, interconnectedness and cultural diversity in the world there are demands that schools teach students to seek unique and creative solutions to solving problems.

Unless the curriculum in Fiji is aligned to the changing need and demands of the society, the nation and the whole world the students will continue to lack the knowledge, skills and attitudes to survive in this globalized world.

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