

GLOCALIZATION AND THE FUTURE OF AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Like globalization, the conceptual utility of glocalisation is in contest. But in general terms it is a "portmanteau word of globalization and localization". Specifically, glocalization refers to any individual, group, division, unit, organization and community which is able to think globally while acting locally. It is an historical process whereby localities develop direct, economic and cultural relationships to the global system through information technologies, bypassing and subverting traditional power hierarchies like national governments." Through the process of globalization, Africa has encountered non-indigenous processes and practices that have had certain influences on African peoples, economy and culture. Basically, globalization which is conceived as "the universalization of capitalism" has imposed on Africa alien processes and practices that have either enriched or corrupted its socio-cultural, political and economic system. But glocalization affords Africa an alternative to the negative influences of globalization. The process of glocalization can create new opportunities for Africa to assert local autonomy and control its own socio-political and economic destiny. This can be done by adopting those positive influences of globalization like IT development to enrich the socio-cultural and economic system of Africa while those things that are truly alien to it can be resisted.

INTRODUCTION

Glocalization has been known as a sustainable alternative to the process of globalization. Globalization as a contemporary phenomenon has been questioned because of its perceived and obvious negative socio-cultural and economic effects on local and international communities. To some scholars such as Asobie (2001) and Odock (2002), the disadvantages of globalization were of greater concern than its possible advantages. This pessimism about globalization, coupled with its ascendancy and powerful force since the 20th century led several scholars and theorists across disciplinary boundaries to find a moderating approach, especially in the developing world like Africa. The emergence of the concept of glocalization is the result of those efforts. The term "glocal", which is a combination of global and local, indicate how this concept represents an attempt to find optimal and sustainable solutions to local and/or international problems in the era of globalization.

The concept of glocalization which was first created by Japanese companies in the 1970s as they planned to expand to different parts of the world is basically an economic and commercial concept and phenomenon but it manifests itself in socio-cultural, political and geographical milieu.

One of the major criticisms leveled against globalization is that its features and processes threaten

the existence, sovereignty and territoriality of nation-states. This is made more manifest through the operations and activities of multinational corporations. Over the years Africa has had to contend with the problems and challenges of globalization. But glocalization affords Africa an alternative to the negative impacts of the process of globalization. The process can create new opportunities for Africa to assert local autonomy and control its own socio-cultural and economic destiny.

Thus, this paper pursues the objectives of examining the origin and meaning of glocalization, its application in socio-cultural and economic contexts and how it can be used to reposition Africa as socio-cultural, economic and political force in a globalized world.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATION

According to Khondker (2004:1), it is often difficult in social sciences to trace the origin of concepts. This is because concepts, theories and ideas are often products of collective endeavours. Thus, it would be extremely difficult to identify who used the term “glocalization” first.

Epistemologically, however, the term glocalization originated from within Japanese business and commercial practices. It is coined from the Japanese word *dochakuka*, which simply means global localization. Originally referring to a way of adopting farming techniques to local conditions, *dochakuka* evolved into a marketing strategy when Japanese businessmen adopted it in the 1980s to mean “the creation of products or services intended for the global market, but customized to suit the local cultures” (Shamsuddoha, 2004; Roudometof, 2005).

The term was popularized in the English – speaking world by the British sociologist, Roland Robertson in the 1990s, the Canadian sociologists, Keith Hampton and Barry Wellman in the late 1990s and Zygmunt Bauman (Wellman and Hampton, 1999; Robertson, 1995). In a slightly different way Wellman and Hampton have frequently used the term to refer to people who are actively involved in both local and wider-ranging activities of friendship, kinship and commerce. Although

the term glocalization has come to be frequently used since the late 1980s, there were several related terms that social scientists used before it and continue to use. One of such related words, which has been in use in social sciences and related fields for quite some time is indigenization. Indigenization can be seen as similar to localization. In both concepts, there is an assumption, as Khondker (2004) has argued, of an original or authentic "locality" or "indigenous system".

Though the concept of glocalization is intricately linked to globalization, there are some important differences. If one takes a long-view of globalization, it will be found that "locality" or "local" itself which is an aspect of glocalization, is a consequence of globalization. Secondly, while globalization pushes for the process and sustenance of global culture, glocalization is on the other hand concerned with indigenous systems and cultures being located within a definable territory though with a view to global reach. Yet there is hardly any culture that can be seen as isolated or unconnected from the global processes. Thus globalization and glocalization are to be seen as interrelated processes. This is so because there is a relationship between the global and the local. According to Giddens (2000: 31) for instance, globalization "is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world".

Thirdly, while globalization seeks to conquer and overcome space and local identities, glocalization seeks to retain space and local identities, though in practice, there is no spatial-temporal differentiation between the local and the global.

GLOBALIZATION AND THE FUTURE OF AFRICA

Since the last decade of the 20th century, the world has witnessed a new economic, political and socio-cultural process, called globalization, which is universally known as a new stage of capitalistic system, a new capitalism (Asobie, 2001; Odock, 2002; Sklair, 2001). Scholars have argued that globalization is an economic phenomenon that conditions, especially economic integrations. However, this process creates problems for many cultures around the world, because there is incompatibility between human relationships and extreme exploitation of resources and the maximization of the concept of competitiveness on liberalized markets (Boyer and Drache, 1996). With particular reference to the developing worlds, especially Africa, globalization through its agents has resulted in the wholesale imposition of exogenous processes on these societies. This has resulted in the search for an alternative to this wholesale imposition of the exogenous processes in the name of globalization.

Glocalization has been known as a sustainable alternative to the process of globalization. The emergence of the concept in Japan and its effects on Japanese marketing strategies since the 1970s show the importance and validity of this process as an alternative to globalization. Although we have argued here that globalization and glocalization are interdependent processes that are intricately linked, Khondker (2004:4) has however observed that "the problem of... globalization of the local and the localization of globality can be expressed in the twin processes of macro-localization and micro- globalization." According to him, macro-localization involves expanding the boundaries of locality as well as making some local ideas, practices and institutions global, while micro- globalization involves incorporating certain global processes into the local setting. Khondker (2004), goes further to submit that the rise of world-wide religious or ethic revivalist movements are examples of macro-localization while social movements such as the feminist movements, ecological movements or new production techniques and marketing strategies which emerge in a certain local context and spread far beyond that locality into a larger context and historical arena over a period of time, are examples of micro- globalization.

Given these context and scenario, how can the process of globalization create new opportunities for

Africa to assert local autonomy and control its own political, socio-cultural and economy destiny? Does Africa and African countries have something to contribute that can make this new process and system work?

For Africa, glocalization can be practiced in the following areas; education, science and technology, social welfare, communication, among others. For this to work, glocalization here must involve blending, mixing, and adapting of two or more processes, one of which must be local. In other words, glocalization for Africa, must include at least one component that addresses Africa's local culture, belief and value systems, political and economic practices and so on.

In Africa, globalization has gained increasing significance in the everyday lives of the people. It is therefore, critical and important that academic leaders and those who formulate educational policies should recognize and respond to this evolution. One way of responding is by developing an educational system that is indigenous to the African society. Through the process of glocalization, academic dialogue and discourse should be focused on and concerned with a rapidly evolving global environment and its implications on African continent. The product of this effort and process will be an educational system and academic environment whose thrust and values are more conducive to the

eradication of underdevelopment, dependence and exploitation in Africa. An educational system that values Africa's cultural and socio-economic systems and with a blueprint for its transfer to the international system.

In science and technology, Africa through glocalization can strike a balance between its local markets and products and the adoption of modern technology. Modern technologies, such as ICT, adopted from outside the continent can be localized and used to enhance the growth and development of scientific and technological innovations that are original to the African society. This will result to an end of a system that allows for the flow of innovations in only one direction: from the headquarters of multinational corporations out into Africa.

In social welfare, glocalization also presents a potential response meant to offer protection against the more negative effects of globalization. As Hong and Song (2010) have shown, given the rapidly expanding harmful effects of globalization upon society as a whole, and Africa in particular, the glocalization of social work may present a powerful and necessary approach to containing or cutting down on these effects. According to Hong and Song (2010), globalization can be found to harm local economies, undermine the sovereignty of Nation-State Governments (NSGs), and create instances of unemployment and poverty in various parts of the

world. It is in recognition of these negative effects that these scholars present a case in favour of the glocalization of social work to enhance the social welfare of citizens.

In their observation, Hong and Song (2010) have argued that given the transformations influenced by globalization, there is a growing necessity to expand beyond the rather limited view of social work to better suit the needs of modern society. According to them, glocalization provides the potential to create new social actors and structures that are essentially "local in spirit but global in character", capable of responding to local social problems brought on by neglect of the welfare state in a format that is backed by global insight and power. To make this work, Hong and Song suggest the development of a globalized social policy, assisted by international organizations, that together can establish and advocate a common set of solutions to increasing global pressures. Such a system, according to them, would be able to create opportunities for all by investing more in such things as education, and vital public services. Through this top-down approach of global forces acting at local levels, the authors argue that glocalization of social work will offer a means for advancing local welfare and contribute the strength needed to confront increasingly complex global social

problems as they become more pronounced into the future.

In Africa, the media of mass communication, especially in the area of television programming, present another important realm in which glocalization is made apparent and quite visible. A powerful means of making connections on international scale, the media remains nonetheless a powerful tool capable of having an impact on a more local stage. According to Khondker (2004:6), from televised drama...and even "reality shows", one finds attempts of glocalization very much appealing to the people.

The use of the internet also encourages glocalization. Hampton (2010) among others offers a meaningful example of this reality through his study of internet rise by local communities of urban underclass citizens. Unfortunately, the use of computers and the internet are still at its lowest ebbs in Africa (Aaron, 2001).

CONCLUSION

We have in this paper presented glocalization as a valid and viable alternative to the negative impacts of globalization on national economies, socio-cultural activities, belief and moral systems of nations and the sovereignty of nation-state governments. With particular focus on Africa, we have listed the various areas and sectors of existence where glocalization remains meaningful though within limits and also a potent weapon for enabling Africa to assert local autonomy and control over its future and destiny.

But to be meaningful and to achieve its purpose, glocalization in Africa must strike a balance between local market and a highly rational approach to governance which is evidenced by a near-absence of political corruption. Herein lies the problem for utilising the full potentials of the process of glocalization.

Africa as it is presently constituted, is saddled with a political leadership that is administratively backward, ideologically stranded and functionally illiterate. Unless there is a change in the class of leadership in Africa, the benefits of glocalization may remain a mirage to the continent in the near future. Ultimately, Africa's development experience will be rooted in African environment and context with the aim of exporting the idea abroad.

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