Globalization and Early Childhood Education: Urban Families Perceptions

Dr. Shelina Bhamani

Abstract

This study attempted to explore the belief patterns and opinions of families of young children in the context of globalization and its role in the provision of education. The paper's particular focus was to argue how urban families perceive and practice globalization for their children's education. Additionally, it briefly reviewed the school of thought (i.e. Modern or Traditional) sample families belong to. The research focuses on the narrative paradigm with a mixed methodical design through which quantitative and qualitative perspectives can be sought. A total sample of 104 family members was taken to carry out a quantitative survey and a sample of 12 family members was chosen to carry out focus grouped discussions to supplement through qualitative insights. A customized quantitative survey and focus group interview guide was designed for data collection. Descriptive statistics and ANOVA were applied to analyze quantitative data sets and thematic analysis was done for the qualitative data sets. The findings of the research demonstrated that most of the families were prone towards globalization and widely practice its implication in the education of their young children.

Keywords: Education, globalization, modernization, family, paradigm shift

Introduction and Literature Review

Globalization has become an eminent phenomenon in this era and has attracted an extensive attention of the modern world theorists, philosophers and human development practitioners. Globalization is interpreted differently by different authors. Gidden (2011) and O'Byrne and Hensby (2011) have described globalization as universal change, transformation and development. Globalization takes place in various conditions and situations. Globalization is also defined as homogeneity and cross border interaction of two nation states: where ideas and cultural exchange takes place. This phenomenon is widely studied in the west and a few critiques of globalization also argue that it is more a political agenda than a trend (Beck, 2000). It occurs also with changes in practice and principles which belong to different cultures; it also originates with changes in policies and capitalist development, and also with the technological advancement reforms. Hence, the role of globalization is pragmatic in all spheres of life.

Globalization in the educationmilieu can be seen as emanating from the late twentieth century when the strident demand for skilled and well qualified labour hit the capitalist market. At the same time, various international and human development agencies set universal goals of focusing education at all levels and for everyone. These initiatives have embodied and envisaged aspirations and zeal across the globe to keep education as a global agenda then simply increasing statistics. With this, came a number of paradigm shifts in the conceptualisation of education from simply few of formal secular education to a lifelong learning process. Globalization has not only influenced the higher and tertiary level learning but has also influenced its roots of learning in early years of life. In this context, many new initiatives were deployed to cater to the core purpose of education for all and meet the global agenda set for imparting education and to promote early childhood education so that children can be prepared for a more informed and organised adult life and can contribute in country's economic growth and development.

The influence of globalization in early childhood education (ECE) can be witnessed by the representation of global approaches demonstrated in most of the ECE programmes that cater to young children, their developmental needs and their education within the philosophical framework of child centred approach (Pearson & Degotardi, 2009). However, there has been a lot of debate on implications of Western and European strategies on the local settings of countries with less human development index. This is also widely accredited by many critiques that mere adoption of western strategies does not work in the local settings most of the time since eastern cultures are heavily influenced by their own cultures and patterns of living (Kennedy, 2006). Regardless of all the critiques in most of the eastern and low income countries ECE is practiced to meet the global agenda and as a tool that will lead to a better economic growth in future for such nations. The claims on significance of ECE for a better future by social media, international community and local labour market have resulted in increasing enrolment of young children and their participation in the education programmes and in formal schooling. So, not only the international agencies, government and community leaders emphasize and create opportunities to give access and supply education to young children but families and communities too have started showing willingness towards it. The core purpose of such initiatives to invest in young children's education is to harness love for knowledge, develop sense of belongingness with human community regardless of cast, creed, culture and country and to work as advocates of bringing positive change. Thus, families today specifically in the urban settings of low income earning countries have become aware and participate in enrolling their children in programmes that offers complete package of transformation and enhancement of basic life skills. This is evident from the observation that in many schools families come with a criteria for choosing a child care provision that has English as a medium of instruction, Information and Communication Technology as a mandatory subject and life skills as a core component of curriculum. Not only that the families in the urban context are particular about the educational centres where their young children's go to but also endeavour to educate them to compete in the modern world.

This paradigm shift in the thinking and approaches of urban area families towards educating their young ones drew the interest of the researcher to explore this phenomenon and explore the responses to thegiven broader questions that emerged from observing this trend:

1. Which value system do the urban area families belong to? Are they modern, traditional or liberal?
2. Do they think globalization is a way to create a more peaceful world or is it just a western trend?
3. What are their perceptions and beliefs about educating young children, giving them exposure to different cultures and giving them autonomy to choose?
4. Why are they sending their children to the child care? What do they think school should teach children?
5. Do they think families, communities, cultures and policies should change with the progressing time and why? Should young children be taught to change with the progressing world and get exposure to education that is accredited anywhere in the world and why?

Based on the empirical observation of the researcher of this emerging trends and literature reviews, an inquiry was determined to seek the answers of the mentioned questions that will not only provide insights to the researcher to learn more about this topic but will also contribute to bridge knowledge gap amongst the globalist community from the eastern hemisphere.

Methodology

Mix method was chosen to collect the quantitative and qualitative data. The sample of the study comprised of 104 family members belonging to 12 families of different socio-economic strata was selected for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Participants were selected based on the non-probability convenient sampling. Families of young school going children of ages of 3 – 8 and belonging to urban areas of metropolitan city were invited for the study. According to the distribution of monthly income, there were 54 families with a monthly income between $200 to $500, 27 families from $ 550 - $ 700 and 23 families from $1000 monthly income participated in the study. The data was collected using customized measures that consisted of a basic demographic section followed by a 15 item tailor made questionnaire and an interview guide to collect the data from the focus group. The questionnaire was distributed amongst the family members whose children study in selected schools.. Focus group discussions were carried out with12 family members who volunteered to participate.

Results, Findings and Analysis

The data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 for the quantitative data analysis and thematic analysis was done to analyse the qualitative data. General themes were developed and analyses were shown accordingly. Following three themes were identified and supported by the quantitative analysis:

- Modern vs Traditional Approach
- Autonomy or Control
- Education, Advancement and Globalization

Modern vs Traditional approach of the families

The data revealed that half of the families belonged to the modern school of thought and half were from the traditional thought. This was supported by the subjective comments of the family members provided in the focus group discussions. In one of the occurrences a grandmother stated, "No matter how advance we grow, we must not forget our culture and tradition. I will never let child adapt to modern thinking and leave all his culture behind". On the contrary, a mother dressed in modern attire stated, "We need to grow as the world grows. I need to make myself modern so that my child should not think that my mother does not know anything". In addition, a father commented that being modern is about bringing in new practices in the child care and education and not merely following western practices and curriculum as a sacred book. He also questioned that if parents are not thinking of changing their value systems then what are the contributing factors that motivate them to send their children to modern schools. To this one of the mothers shouted, "Not all types!FirstI will see what modern education. I will not allow the school to give sex education it is also included in modern education". Another parent in support indicated, "Old is gold but this proverb seems to become less important and we need to compete with the world by adopting latest and modern education. Modern education is advance and children of this era are way smarter and more informed than the ones in the past. The children can polish up their skills by adapting the latest education". This can also be seen in the quantitative response (see Table 1) of the parents which revealed that most of the families want their children to adapt to new changes, should not face barriers of old tradition and study in modern schools. However, there are observable disagreements of letting young children watch international TV channels. This may be because through this many young children in their early years of life tend to

observe and learn anything and everything that is attractively presented to them (Bolter & Grusin,2002; Dimitriadis, 2005 & Rinaldi, 2005).

TABLE 1

Items	Indicators	Yes	No
2	We feel that my child should adapt to the new changes.	101	3
3	We feel my child should not face barrier of old traditions.	86	18
8	We send my child to a non-conventional and a modern preschool.	83	21
14	We prefer my child to watch international TV stations.	44	60

In many research studies, authors have interconnected numerous influences of globalization and its effect on the families. A few have reasoned that it is relatively difficult in the Asian and Eastern countries for the families to accept and conceptualize change and globalization. However, according to World Bank (2005) the developing countries are taking regulatory actions to gradually take a shift to the modern paradigms.

Autonomy or Control

Modernization changes human thinking and impact their behaviour to a greater extent. Consequently, families and parents also get prone to these changes and embed them in their daily routines. It was quite some time back when children and youth had no say in their families but now this concept of participatory decision making has evolved. Parents in this era practice a very different style of parenting and give their children identity and rights in the family to exercise individuality and autonomy. As it can be seen from the quantitative data (see Table 2) that most of the parents have shown their acceptance by giving responses in "yes" to the indicators of autonomy and freedom. This was also observed in the qualitative analysis where majority of the family members shared their insights about the significance of giving right of choice to the young children. In support, one sister shared, "In our house even my youngest brother aged 5 is given opportunity to take part in the family decisions. When we planned to move our house we asked him if it will be okay with him to change the school. So he said no and we all pondered upon his choice to see how we can manage this situation". Similarly, a grandmother shared her experiences stating, "In our times our children never use to even say that we will not wear this, we will not wear that but now when I dress my granddaughter she picks her own dress for her playgroup and I have to oblige, they are very smart".

TABLE 2

Items	Indicators	Yes	No
1	We accept if my child shows disagreement towards a certain choices.	95	9
4	We give my child right to choose what he/she wants to wear.	95	9
5	We give my child right to choose friends.	71	33
6	We give my child right to make his/her decisions.	71	33

Above findings is also highlighted in Ronald's (2000) work where he has emphasized on families changing their mind-sets, value systems and approaches towards family principles and practices. It is only when people change from one mind set to the other that appears more constructive and evolutionary to them, there is an evidence of modernization taking place in that community.

Education, Advancement and Globalization
An ecological model suggests that in order to prevent family concerns related to globalization, it is necessary to examine multiple issues simultaneously from several different levels that boost protective factors and reduce risk factors (focus on increasing resource access and resilience). Nothing more can be as powerful as the participation of family in education and development of the young children. The qualitative data revealed that most of the families wanted their children to get access to high quality education. To supplement this one of the fathers stated, "Neither had I gone to any preschool nor my siblings but I made sure that I send my child to a school so that she is learning all those basic skills and concepts which I learned when I went to grade III". A mother with shining eyes mentioned, "Because I was a young girl my family did not send me to school but I am glad that my in-laws are very supportive of my young girl's education. She is turning 6 this year and she even knows how to speak in English. Her learning and grooming also encouraged me to learn English and IT skills. Now I know computer and daily my daughter and I sit for 30 minutes to play educational games on computer". A grandfather shared his story; "when I was a child, I grew up in a conventional educational setup where we did not have any exposure to computers and books of other countries. We were given books and chapters to rote learn. I learned alphabets without knowing that they carry a sound which helps us to form words out of it. But I am glad my grandchildren are receiving conceptual education that is compatible enough. My grandchildren also skype with my brother's grandchildren. This era is amazing it is keeping us all connected and makes our children smart and active because they learn by playing". These qualitative insights were also supported by the quantitative data analysis. As can be seen in table 3 below, that most of the family members have shown their acceptance towards sending children to a preschool, which provides for international curriculum and exposure to latest technology. Qualitative data also revealed that most of the family members give significance to modern education knowing this will lead to a better and prosperous future of their children (Banks, 2001; Brooker,2008; Cano-Garcia & Hughes, 2000 & UNICEF,2008).

TABLE 3

Items	Indicators	Yes	No
7	We send my child to get preschool for a better future.	95	9
9	We prefer my child to study international curriculum.	92	12
10	We would want my child to learn English in his/her early life.	98	6
11	We send my child to preschool to compete with the progressing world.	98	6
12	We think my child should read books of other countries.	101	3
13	We prefer my child to learn computers.	104	
15	We send my child to preschool so that he/she can contribute in the country's progress in future.	92	12

Conclusion
Globalization, modernization and advancement are cutting edge today for nations and global development. Countries with tendency to receive and integrate globalization in their structure and policies have outgrown in all spheres of human development whereas the nations with resistance to change and globalization are dependent upon the ones who have already globalised (Dale & Dale, 2011). Globalization in today's world is not a luxury but a serious and urgent need. It is also vital for education sector in Pakistan's to advance towards modern

methodology and policies to meet the challenges of the coming era. Similarly, it is imperative for the communities, families and parents of the young children to advocate pluralism and diversity. Also, to encourage and facilitate young children to be open to new ideas and change since a better future can only be promised if young children are prepared to be responsible and informed human beings to be able to support globalization from early stages of their lives.

References

- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2004). The high cost of high school dropouts: what the nation pays for inadequate high schools. Washington, DC.
- Banks, J. A. (2001). Multicultural education issues and perspectives (4th Ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Beck,U. (2000). *What is globalization?*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bolter, D and Grusin, R. (2002). Remediation. New York, Lang Publishing.
- Brooker, L. (2008) Learning to be a child: Cultural diversity and early years ideology. In N. Yelland (Ed.) 'Cultural Diversity and Early Years Ideology in Critical Issues in Early Childhood Education' eds Yelland N Open University Pressmc Graw-hill Education Berkshire England 115-131
- Cano-Garcia and Hughes, (2000). Learning and thinking styles: An analysis of their interrelationship and influence on academic achievement. Educational Psychology. V 20: 4.
- Dale, R. (2010). Specifying globalization effects on national policy: a focus on the mechanisms. Journal of educational policy. 14(1), 1 -17.
- Dale, R. (n.d.). Globalization and education: demonstrating a "common world educational culture" or locating a "globally structured educational agenda"!. School of Education:Auckland.
- Dimitriadis, G. (2005). Performing identity/ performing culture. hip hop as text, pedagogy, and lived practice. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York
- Giddens, A. (2011). *Runaway world.* Profile Books. Retrieved November 24, 2012, from Ebook Library.
- National Early Childhood Education Curriculum 2003. Retrieved from http://trconline.org/wpcontent/uploads/2008/08/NECE-Curriculum-English.pdf
- O'Byrne, D., & Hensby, A. (2011). Theorizing global studies. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pearson, E., & Degotardi, S. (2009). Education for sustainable development in early childhood\ education: A global solution to local concerns? International Journal Of Early Childhood, 41(2), 97-111.
- Rinaldi, C. (2005) Making Learning Visible, Keynote speech at the 15th EECERA Conference, Dublin Ireland.
- Ronald, P. American Sociological Review. (2000). Vol. 65 (February: 19-51 University of Michigan. P.67 277
- UNICEF (2008) Report Card 8 Innocenti Research Centre A League Table of Early Childhood Education and Care in Economically Advanced Countries, Florence: UNICEF.
- World Bank. (2005). World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development. Washington, D.C: World Bank. Retrieved from http://wdronline.worldbank.org/worldbank/a/c.html/world_development_report_2006/c p t e r _ 7 _ h u m a n _ c a p a c i t i e s / early_childhood_development_start_life/WB.978-0-8213 6249-5.part3.ch7.sec2#WB.978-0-8213-6249-5.part3.ch7.sec2