

Developing Global Competence and Conserving Human Values through Universal Education: Present and Future Possibilities

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Abstract: *The general objective of this study is to introduce a new paradigm shift in education aimed at uniting the world to form and adopt a universal form of education that will make people globally competent. It is aimed at awakening the world to come to terms with the changing nature of the global community, its interconnectedness and interdependence. This paper advocates for the world to adopt a common education to enable people understand and function effectively in the mist of the mass migration of people from different parts to other parts of the world. The paper provides a working framework and conceptual clarification of universal education; goals and objectives of universal education and its characteristics were also extensively discussed. The needs for universal education as a precursor to global competence were also identified. This article also provides strategies and ideas for building universal education that will cover all aspects of global existence, and develop global and multiple competences in the face of a rapidly changing world.*

Keywords: *Universal Education, Global Competence, Multiple Perspective, Global Education, Multicultural Education.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The call for a new paradigm in education and global survival, births the idea of universal education that will have a common objectives world over and can easily be adjusted to serve all learners of different mental age and level regardless of their race, color and gender affiliations. There is an increasing call for a more powerful and relevant learning in response to these new demands and opportunities (Reimers, 2009, Stewart, 2007). The rationale for the conception of the idea of a universal education is based on the changing population and the growing interconnectedness of the world. The migration of people from different parts of the world calls for a form of education that will see humanity as its central theme and focus. Regardless of race, religion color or gender, the world should unite to seek a common form of education that will be universally applicable in all nations of the world. Universal education is a proposed kind of education devoid of all forms of racial discrimination, clarifying prejudice, dispersing all forms of suspicion and allaying fears of people different from us. Universal education is proposed to face and meet the universal needs of the global community. The threat to global peace is on the increase through the activities of terrorist, the mass exodus of people from their countries to other parts of the world, calls for a universal form of education to encourage functionality and productivity in the global community. Universal education recognizes the humanity of individuals, their race, gender ethnic and religious affiliations and seeks to merge it with their needs. Human needs hinges on six levels according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Physiological needs include the basic necessities of life (Gorman, 2010). These needs may include food, water, and shelter. The need for safety, security stability and freedom from fear, have a sense of belonging and love in a safe and acceptable environment. There is a need to have good esteem through recognition and achievement (Maslow, 1943). It's a form of education that sees humanity before any nation, race, ethnic, religious or cultural affiliations. It seeks the pursuit of happiness and self-actualization and personal fulfillment. Universal education seeks to motivate the pursuit of inner talent and creativity fulfillment through self-transcendence. It also promotes the desire to help others and create better interpersonal relationships needed for sustainable human development. The idea of a universal education is an education that will cut across national boundaries to eradicate preexisting feelings of suspicion, mistrust and discrimination among learners. This is an educational idea, a unified subject matter taught around the globe whose main concern will be to mend fences of division, build trust and discourage suspicion and bias on the bases of differences. It should teach equity, fairness, social justice, love, kindness and mutual respect. In this age of technological explosion and global migration, it is important for the world to accept a universal education as advocated in this paper.

2. A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSAL EDUCATION:

Universal education is a continuous approach to working with children, parents, families and other agents of socialization every day. This means that the focus of this form of education enables learners to learn about their own backgrounds; learn about the backgrounds of people who are different from them; appreciate the differences and uniqueness of other worlds; continually be exposed to activities, materials, learning of languages as means of communication, and concrete experiences that will eradicate, prejudice, discrimination and stereotypes; learn that harassment and intolerance in the face of differences is never an acceptable mode of behavior. We need a profound reshaping of education; humanity is facing grave difficulties that can only be solved on a global scale. Education is not moving rapidly enough to provide the knowledge about the outside world and the attitudes toward other people that may be essential for human survival (Reischauer 1973: 4).

Universal education seeks to reawaken humanity to bring back its values going into extinction. It is a quest to save our world from imminent destruction. Human values such as love, respect, empathy, sympathy, kindness, honesty, tolerance, peace and unity need to be reawakened for the survival of our world and for future generations; people need to see a needy people before seeing their race, gender or religion. Appiah (2006) argues that “no local loyalty can ever justify forgetting that each human being has responsibilities to every other” (p. xvi). The world is uniting to fight climate change, global warming, terrorism, famine, hunger, sicknesses, diseases, and the conservation and preservation of species going into extinction. There is need to have a unifying form of education that simply examine and meet the learning needs of everyone in the global community, this is the birth place of universal education.

Universal education is a form of education that is adaptable to all forms of education and at all levels. It is adjustable to meet the learning needs of all learners, regardless of race, age, gender, etc. if the world looks beyond borders to engage in economic trade, fight terrorism and various outbreak of deadly diseases, education should also go beyond borders not just in theory but in practice. Education should be all encompassing and embracing all aspects of human existence. Education should abolish all negative histories and start over to create a new world of people with a healthy sense of belonging. Universal education as a new paradigm in education is advocated to influence all aspects of daily living and a responsibility for all agents of socialization. Enculturation is the process by which students become knowledgeable of and competent in their communities throughout life, and socialization is the process of behaving based on the accepted norms and values of the culture or society the individual experiences (Pinker, 2002). Omare (1999) observes that at various times, the need arises for countries to seek solution to pressing problems of national importance, and this has been the position of various countries in search of political stability, unity, peace and progress; and the instrument employed always to achieve unity and national consciousness is education.

Universal education means recognizing, accommodating, accepting, tolerating and meeting the learning needs of all global learners. It means acknowledging that your students have a range of individual learning needs and belong to diverse communities and education should reflect, promote and facilitate this. Multicultural awareness is necessary to facilitate effective communication between from different cultures. It provides teachers with the skills to gain greater self-awareness, greater awareness of others, and better interpersonal skills; it also helps teachers to more effectively challenge stereotypes and prejudices (Banks, 2004). Universal education is educational quests to enable people develop an appreciation for diverse perspectives and the historical transformation of the various cultures of the world. It embraces all the changes that have occurred as a result of religion, nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, age, education, socio-economic status, and language. Students should be able to perceive how intertwined their lives with others, and “develop ethical positions about global issues that are informed, thoughtful, and nuanced” (Nair, Norman, Tucker, & Burkert, 2011, p. 60) while engaging in socially responsible behavior.

3. UNIVERSAL EDUCATION:

Universal education is a movement for the emancipation of humanity through the rebuilding of human values, developing justice and equity in global citizenship. It is study focused on the general principles that underlie humanity. Being tolerant of each other and caring for each other is what makes us human. By teaching tolerance, we allow individuality and diversity while promoting peace and a civil society. Our success in the struggle of intolerance depends on the effort we make to educate ourselves and our children. “Intolerance can be unlearned. Tolerance and mutual respect have to be learnt” (United Nations Information Service 2004).

4. GLOBAL COMPETENCE:

According to the National Education Association (NEA, 2010), Global competence refers to the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and understanding of international issues, an appreciation of and ability to learn and work with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, proficiency in a foreign language, and skills to function productively in an interdependent world community. Global competence is: “having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively outside one’s environment,” (Hunter, 2004). Lambert (1996), considered by many as the father of the global competence initiative, identified a globally competent person as one who has knowledge (of current events), can empathize with others, demonstrates approval (maintains a positive attitude), has an unspecified level of foreign language competence and task performance (ability to understand the value in something foreign).

5. GOALS OF UNIVERSAL EDUCATION:

The goals of universal education should have the following goals:

- Develop an in-depth knowledge of the world’s existent histories, cultural practices, racial identities, environmental issues, and awaken the interest and curiosity on global issues.
- Teach the individual to embrace differences in color, race, and gender as unifying factors not as divisive tools. The knowledge of difference among people and the reasons for these unique characteristics that can be used as a symbol of identification and not for stigmatization.
- The individual should be taught basic survival skills and self-reliance as a means of grooming them for future migration challenges. To inculcate the appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice at work and play, as ones contribution to the development of the nation and the world at large.
- Multilingual avenues should be explored for second language learning. People should be encouraged to learn languages different from their own. This is necessary for effective communication in this age of globalization.
- Multicultural education, global education and citizenship education should form part of the universal education focus. Global interdependence is a reality and education should focus on developing global responsible citizens.
- The promotion of strength and value of unity in diversity, tolerance and emphasis on human rights and respect for those who are different. To ensure people develop sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and interdependence among peoples of all races, ethnic, religious and gender.

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF UNIVERSAL EDUCATION:

- It is both formal and informal form of education. All agents of socialization should be involved in the education process
- It is a continuous form of education, suitable for all ages and mental levels of education.
- It is adaptable and adjustable form of education.
- It is practical, logical and measurable.
- Its views all human rights as universal, valuable, indivisible, and interdependent and interconnected.
- Seeks to promote healthy interpersonal relationship among people, while developing positive human values necessary for creating an accommodative environment for all earth inhabitants.

7. NEED FOR UNIVERSAL EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING GLOBAL COMPETENCE AND MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES:

The role of universal education in developing global competence and multiple perspectives can be seen in its objectives of discovering knowledge, skills, attitudes that are relevant and self-motivated learning that will prepare young and old people to compete, make useful contributions and effectively collaborate in a new world order. Education should build human behaviors and relationships; this is because people will continue to encounter diversity. There are individuals who use these encounters to fuel a flame of unjustified hatred and rage based on nothing more than preconceived prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination; social biases that have long plagued society (Hall, 2010; Sritharan & Gawronski, 2010). It’s in the goals of universal education to eradicate such occurrences or bring it to its barest minimum. Education and familiarization with the object of a prejudice or stereotype allows the truth to be discovered and applied (Fowers & Richardson, 1996; Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary, 2001). Being educated allows an

individual the ability to embrace and accept differences in others, and aids in bringing society together (Plant & Devine, 2009). This justifies the need for universal education in developing global competence, multiple perspectives and eradicating prejudice, stereotype and discrimination. Universal education places a demand on people to live beyond their national borders, interest, racial affiliations and to see a world where they can make positive contributions to its development and future survival.

Universal education is aimed at developing multiple competences in the individual, making them relevant and competent in the changing global world. Competence is defined as the ability to combine and apply relevant attributes to particular tasks in particular contexts. These attributes include high levels of knowledge, values, skill, personal dispositions, sensitivities and capabilities, and the ability to put those combinations into practice in an appropriate way (Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, 2002). This is further supported by Hanvey (2004) when he argued that education for a global perspective enhances the individual's ability to understand his or her condition in the community and the world, and improves the ability to make effective judgments (introduction).

The demographic change of the global population creates a need to examine what educators are teaching in the classroom to validate and adapt learners on diverse global cultures, practices, beliefs, values and norms held by diverse populations. The need for universal education is also justified by its similarities to global education which according to Bourke (2009) states that, "The five learning emphases that reflect recurring themes in global education are interdependence and globalism; identity and cultural diversity; social justice and human rights; peace building and conflict resolution; and sustainable futures" (p. 34). This learning emphasis in universal education is relevant due to the growing global interconnectedness and growing interdependence of people beyond their national borders. Universal education will help in building bridges for easy transition necessitated by rapid technological explosions, cultural pluralism, increased competition for resources, the emergence of the internet, and refugee movements due to global wars and terrorism. Bainbridge, Pantaleo and Ellis (1999) explain that globalization is seen in the high incidence of refugees, immigration statistics, and the changing face of almost every urban neighborhood in the Western world" (p. 183). The global trend of population change in most countries justifies the need for universal education in the world education system. Universal education is a unified and practice that is based on making the world people more just and humane. Its practicability is centered on the human needs that are universal in nature. It is aimed at educating people to develop valuable attitudes that embrace tolerance, a commitment to individual and global cooperation, an appreciation of our common humanity, and a sense of responsibility.

Universal education prepares the individual for the growing global interdependence and empowers the individual to treat others fairly, with equity and justice. Wan (2006) notes that, "...educators in particular are faced with the task of preparing the youngsters to live in today's diverse global community with each other harmoniously, successfully and productively" (p. 140). Brewster (2008) explains that the term "global village" is often used as a metaphor to describe our growing global interdependence (p. 371). Merryfield (1996) explains that, "Today's schools face the challenge of preparing young people for a world that is undergoing dramatic change" (p. ix). Fujikane, (2003) was of the view that there is a gradual resurgence of global thinking since the beginning of the 21st century. It is the realization that we live in in an interrelated world. According to Fujikane (2003), three reasons for this shift in worldviews, which should relate to a strong focus on: (a) the intensity of interdependence in all aspects of human life; (b) Falk's discussion on global citizenship (as cited in Steenbergen, 1994) "based on social responsibility, solidarity, a feeling for equity, and for nature" (p.7), and (c) "the growing moral sense of 'oneness' transcending national borders" (Fujikane, 2003, p. 143).

Universal education covers all aspects of multilingual and multicultural state of every nation, Multilingualism characterizes multicultural societies all over the world therefore multilingual and multicultural education programs are a necessary element in the world's educational platform. According to Banks (1993), the ever increasing numbers of immigrants from all over the world require a continued demand for teachers with skills to work with limited English proficient students.

Universal education means recognizing, accommodating, accepting, tolerating and meeting the learning needs of all global learners. It means acknowledging that your students have a range of individual learning needs and belong to diverse communities and education should reflect, promote and facilitate this. It takes a coherent approach which is anticipatory and proactive it employs a strategy for delivering equal opportunities and diversity policies. Universal education envisions a world in which every child learns to respect, tolerate and accept all people, regardless of gender

identity/expression, it seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community.

Universal education is an academic endeavor with a notable impact on creating social and cultural cohesion in both the classroom and outside the classroom. A multicultural environment in universal education should promote acceptance of people from different ethnic, racial, cultural, gender and religious backgrounds. The total elimination of all forms of discrimination is a major focus of universal education. The acceptance and active participation of learners in a multicultural environment in an interconnected world will aid in building values for peace, respect for human rights and the promotion of balanced human and sustainable development.

Wars are tearing people apart, hunger, sicknesses and disease are ravaging and all humans seek is a means to survive. The quest for survival is fuelling the wheels of migration, driving people across borders into different territories, seeking for safe haven for the born and the unborn. These migration challenges, the pursuit of happiness and future survival, calls for a new approach to an all-inclusive education which brings to birth the idea of a universal education. This universal education is hinged on the premise that learning about other people, their culture and their world in an unbiased manner will aid the future survival of people wherever they may find themselves. Universal education seeks to collapse the walls that separate us, fuelling the things that make us human and yet not disregarding the underlying factors of our differences. An important tenet of social justice education is that students become “empowered” when provided with opportunities to engage in learning that aims to rectify social injustices (Shor, 1992; Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Upadhyay, 2010).

The need to develop critical thinking skills through universal education is necessary to enable people make value judgment by integrating multiple perspectives into their personal and global experiences, knowing that their decision has significant impact on others. Critical thinking is the ability to think for oneself, apply reasoning and logic to new or unfamiliar ideas, analyze ideas, make inferences, and solve problems (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006).

The need to develop social justice also calls for an education that is universal. According to Cochran-Smith (2004), Social justice is the ability to understand and think about the social and political challenges that societies, communities, and individuals face and proactively act upon these challenges. Universal education provides a better understanding of inequities present in the global community of nations and its effect on people around the globe. It encourages the will to seek better solutions for solving global challenges.

8. THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY IN CONSERVING HUMAN VALUES:

The role of the school and community in building a well-developed and balanced individual in the global community using universal education can be seen as follows:

1. To develop the love and respect for humanity and cultivate positive attitudes to global citizenship and a quest to pursue healthy global competition;
2. To promote the sympathetic appreciation for global diversity, global interconnectedness and interdependence among peoples of all races and colors;
3. To awaken the intellectual curiosity of individuals in identifying human problems, needs of survival and develop positive avenues of solving such problems and meeting each identifiable need as they arise.
4. To develop the inculcation of appropriate values of empathy, equity, honesty, integrity, hard work, kindness fairness and social justice at all levels of human interactions in the global community.
5. Build bridges of meaningful and useful learning between the home, school, community and the world at large. Abstract concepts in the education process should be linked to real life activities and sociocultural realities.
6. The teacher should act as a guide, facilitator in the teaching process. The teacher should promote dialogue, raise awareness on global issues, and provide a link between the present, local future and global occurrences. Respect for learners perspectives, provide a safe environment where each learner has a sense of belonging, and stimulate learners reactions and action to injustice and global problems. Promote human values develop critical thinking skills and problem solving skills.

9. CONCLUSIONS:

There is a need for empirical data to show the prospects, possibilities and future challenges of universal education as a new paradigm in education. The ultimate goal of universal education is to begin a process of change in schools that will ultimately extend to the society. It establishes the need to cultivate in learners the right attitudes, values, behaviors, knowledge and skills so that they can become agents of social change to reform the society in order to eradicate ethnic and racial prejudice and stereotype.

Universal education is aimed at promoting unity in diversity. Abolishing all forms of prejudice, racial and ethnic discrimination and stereotyping. It is a form of education that has as its central theme on humanity. It is a type of education that is concerned with various human groups in the global community that are victims of discrimination because of their unique characteristics ethnic, racial, religious, gender, etc.; it includes studying key concepts as prejudice, identity, conflicts, and alienation, and modifying school practices and policies to reflect an appreciation for these diversity.

Culture shapes human behavior, attitudes, and values. Human behavior results from a process of socialization, and socialization always takes place within the context of specific cultural and ethnic environments (Kallen, 1970; Novak, 1975; Pai, 1984). As Kimball (1987) states, the basic caretaking practices of human survival are essentially the same for everyone, but their pattern, organization, and learning are specific. Hence, humans are social beings who carry within them their individual biological and psychological traits as well as the legacies of their ethnic group's historical background, collective heritage, and cultural experiences. Therefore, to acknowledge and respect one another to be fully human requires mutual understanding and appreciation based on cultural understanding (Gay, 1991; Spindler, 1987).

The advancement of laws on international human rights, and the need for liberty and justice for all and sundry, requires that people acquire the right knowledge, attitudes and values to both guard and endorse the principles of human survival. Beginning to build the knowledge and recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

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