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## Globalization and Curriculum in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Case for Flexible and Dynamic Curriculum

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**Abstract:** From the end of the second world war, the awareness of a globalized society has gained power. The theory of globalization is supported by time and space polarity and how these two elements' change affects the world today. This situation concerns all sectors, including education. Indeed, in this era of globalization and competition, educators, researchers, and employers are concerned about the educational institutions' curriculum to prepare students for employment outside their boundaries. Since globalization influences education practices and curriculum worldwide, employees, like products, are shaped by the educational industry in a complex and competitive job market. Thus, the curriculum makers must ensure the preparation of individuals equipped with 21st century skills. This theoretical paper aims to identify how globalization affects educational practices due to competition and how a flexible and dynamic curriculum looks like in the 21st century. Adaptability, flexibility, and cooperation between developed and developing countries can help train graduates for employment in the 21st century job market.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Competition, Employability, Flexible Curriculum, Dynamic Curriculum, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

### 1. Introduction

It appears ridiculous to link globalization with education and curriculum matters since it is referred to as without a relationship with education (Plum, 2014). Indeed, globalization is a situation in the business world relating to how international business influences ideas and strategies beyond national borders. In globalization, the similarity of goods and services does not care about the national boundary's situation. (Waks, 2006) defines globalization as

The process whereby market exchange relationships and multimedia telecommunications capabilities spread from the core of economically and technologically developed nations to other regions of the world, facilitating the flow of goods, services, and people across national borders, this process being stimulated by, while in turn reinforcing, an image of the world as a unified whole and humanity, despite its cultural diversity and continuing differentiation, as a single global society, while also generating resistance and violent opposition from those excluded from this imagined global society.

Since globalization is a cross-national situation, its forces impact everybody's lives on the planet (Butt, 2011). Also, globalization raises the idea of a compressed world (Robertson, 1992). It contributes to removing borders to allow the movement of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and people across boundaries (Zhou & Ching, 2012). However, globalization is fundamentally geographical because it requires considering space and time to do business (Faulconbridge & Beaverstock, 2009). It is the result of modern changes, mainly an economic activity of collaboration and integration. It is also associated with social and cultural aspects, among which education is.

The concept of globalization gained widespread usage from Theodore Levitt in the early 1980s (Levitt, 1983). Levitt significantly considers technology's role as a powerful force that propels the world to bring things commonly. The observation is the development of worldwide markets for standardized consumer products. The



reality is that companies sell standardized goods in the same way everywhere.

Due to the rise of technology, the world today is comparable to a small village. Indeed, the interconnection among people enables them in international events (White, 2013). The interconnection results from the role of media, technology, trade, and global issues, like conflicts, climate change, and social and economic affairs (Matos, 2012; Zhou & Ching, 2012). Indeed, borders do not have the same meaning they had a few years ago due to globalization. It is why a globalized world necessitates international connections, though they challenge traditional conceptions of national administrative borders. Also, worldwide events have significantly contributed to the amplification of globalization at a level where local situations result from what is happening many miles away (Hall, Held, & McGrew, 1992; Priestley, 2002). By itself, this statement shows how homogeneous and similar phenomena are due to the rapid sharing of information around the world.

Whereas education is part of daily human life, it is clear globalization influences education as well. Do educational stakeholders consider the wholeness of the curriculum at a world level in the era of globalization? Are graduates from some countries able to compete in the job market together with others from western countries? Is education concerned by the movement of globalization, like the business world?

Many authors have written in the area of curriculum and globalization. They focused on the impact of globalization on the curriculum. In this paper, "Globalization and Curriculum in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Case for Flexible and Dynamic Curriculum" however, the author tried to develop a flexible and dynamic curriculum model that fits with the 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements.

## 2. Globalization and Curriculum

The internationalization of curriculum is a growing movement that affects education and focuses on the field's significant changes (Carson, 2009; Foster & Anderson, 2015). Globalization is not a separate process but an inner part of the curriculum (Plum, 2014). It is also essential to know that today's society is subject to socio-economic and cultural changes that today's schools will have to consider in a globalized economy regardless of its geographical location on the globe. Indeed, the internationalization of the Curriculum highlights the idea of having a curriculum that includes all facets in the process of teaching and learning (Foster & Anderson, 2015), the reason globalization is influencing public life and education (Priestley, 2002).

Knowing how technology plays a significant role in a globalized world, schools are criticized for failing to provide various knowledge at the same levels (Butt, 2011). Others believe the distribution becomes more discriminating by one group over others (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). This idea points to the problem of inequalities in knowledge distribution around the world. Indeed, inequalities are evident in the economy, health, food security, and knowledge distribution (Hall, 2019). In this perspective, global social justice depends on global knowledge distribution (Santos, 2007); otherwise, none can talk about globalization in its concrete sense. That is why, in such conditions, governments cannot fight for the advantage of their citizens (Butt, 2011).

Inequalities in knowledge distribution are now a concern of major importance in this era of globalization. Indeed, this is viewed through the supremacy of western societies due to their modernity (Hutmacher, 2005). For example, teachers in developed countries are more familiar with technology in their teaching than those in developing countries and rural places (Lynch, 2016). However, the ideal in globalization is to enable educational institutions to deliver academic standards accessible to more people (McGregor & Park, 2019). However, the authors raise the North's ideological dominance expansion in the curriculum sector over the South. Many areas of the inequalities in terms of knowledge distribution were highlighted in the following way, according to Hall (2019): (a) The history of 'epistemicide, (b) the role of ranking systems, (c) the availability of research funding, (d) the differential workloads, (e) the market priced academic publications, and (f) the language vulnerabilities. For this author, the western countries are the ones who hold the monopoly of knowledge.

The inequalities among educational institutions mainly were made clear from the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic; all aspects of daily human life and the education sector were affected. It clearly showed how countries were differently prepared to continue schooling online or a Remote Emergency Teaching due to class closure. However, the ideal is to ensure the continuity of the learning process, no matter the situation. Indeed, teachers must be "fluent users of technology; creative and collaborative problem solvers; and adaptive, socially aware



experts throughout their careers" (US Office of Educational Technology, 2016). But, during the COVID-19 pandemic, in varied places and countries, schools and teachers suffered to cope with online-based teaching (Engzell, Frey, & Verhagen, 2020). Families faced the same challenges (Doyle, 2020). Indeed, the shift from face-to-face to Remote Emergency Teaching destabilized students, teachers, parents, and administrators (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020). Also, the lack of technological tools within schools from developing countries was another factor describing how evident knowledge distribution inequality is between developing and developed countries.

Since education is considered a 'common good' (UNESCO, 2015) due to its global dimensions (Locatelli, 2017; McMahon, 1987), the world's economic growth depends on education's externalities since its impact is evident at local and global levels. For this reason, education's external benefits are intended for the whole society, not for the individuals or local communities only. Thus, the collaboration between developed and developing countries appears to be a sustainable solution to monopoly and education inequalities.

### 3. Globalization and Collaboration

What makes sense of globalization is that none can stand alone. Globalization is most viewed through the lens of collaboration and partnership, where benefits are shared. The ceaseless stream of information and congruence of educational principles increases the worldwide academic principles where countries contribute to knowledge distribution (Sahlberg, 2006). Ideally, a collaboration climate between organizations is the image of equal distribution of capacities. In the partnership, there is an exchange of goods and knowledge at the same level. Also, even those who cannot understand the imminence of collaboration in a global economy acknowledge the pressure globalization exercises on countries' cooperation than ever before (Hall, 2019).

The same consideration is recognizing that, at an international level, there is a need for collaboration (National Science Foundation, 2012). However, the educational area remains local, that, unlike countries that exchange goods and products, they cannot exchange educational products. It is problematic in many Western countries to recruit graduates from developing countries since their training does not fit developed countries' job realities. In such conditions, many graduates are not globally competitive in the job market. Culture, in some places, is also regarded as a barrier to collaboration since cultural perceptions affect the negotiation process (Wang & Beasley, 2014).

### 4. Globalization and Competition in Education

Today, there is a rise in competition due to globalization. Indeed, globalization has changed the way people conducted business previously. Globalization has enhanced economic competition worldwide and among countries in the same region (Sahlberg, 2006). It is a new system of domination through market logic's imposition on all spheres of societies (Lange, 2003). Thus, the more competitive a company is, the more advantageous it is.

In such a competitive environment, students undergo their academic training from the perspective of suitable employment after their graduation. Of course, a graduate enters the job market knowing it is a competitive ground (Archer & Chetty, 2013). Moreover, the universities' fundamental mission is teaching, research, and public service (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). However, it happens that the third mission of public service is not well fulfilled. In a competitive environment, some educational institutions cannot produce graduates ready for the job market. In this viewpoint, employers are not pleased with the service rendered by new workers (Azmi, Yusri, Noordin, & Nasir, 2018; Tsitskari, Goudas, Tsalouchou, & Michalopoulou, 2017; Williams, 1998). For this reason, the promotion of flexibility, creativity, and risk-taking in educational systems can remedy low competitiveness among academic institutions. Also, the competition in education leads to the following principles:

- Competition between schools creates emulation leading to better outcomes for students.
- Autonomy for schools is necessary for schools to compete correctly.
- Parents are free to send their children in the school of their choice, and



- Information for the public based on comparable measures of student achievement and a single national curriculum. (Levin & Fullan, 2008)

## 5. Educational Change

The educational system's flexibility is crucial in dealing with a permanent change situation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Change is complex, and two types are highlighted: revolutionary and evolutionary (Duke, 2004). For the author, a revolutionary change is an essential and relatively unforeseen change in political power and the political group, which happens when the population revolts against the ruling government. It is often due to oppression or bad governance. Change can also occur in other fields according to its speed. However, the evolutionary change takes more time for implementation, and it is done step by step. I noted educational change occurs permanently and in an evolutionary manner.

### 5.1. Need for Change

Educational change is not the affair of one individual. Stakeholders have to play their respective roles: policymakers as well as teachers (Fullan, 2016). Also, it is vital to note innovation does not happen in emptiness (OECD, 2016). Innovation requires the willingness of partners to cooperate and exchange. In addition, it is essential to note that in the perspective of the innovation process, schools cannot work alone. They need support from policymakers, educational partners, and stakeholders from local to international levels.

The following reasons summarize the need for innovation:

1. Provide new solutions or remove traditional barriers to existing and articulated challenges in teaching.
2. Identify a previously undetected need or barrier, enhance the teaching and learning process with a novel.
3. Introduce new ways to develop the teaching and learning process.
4. Allow the education system to accommodate new avenues through which students learn. (Redding, Twyman, & Murphy, 2014)

The field of educational technology enhanced by Information and Communication Technologies use is a new avenue that needs incorporation through the learning process around the globe. However, it is vital to ask some questions to ensure that the proposed change is indeed and relevant (Duke, 2004):

1. Do current or anticipated conditions call for educational change?
2. How should the need for educational change be characterized?
3. Is there a gap between educational goals and actual performance?
4. Does this gap justify a change in policies, programs (Curriculum), practices, or personnel?
5. Should the purpose of educational change be restoration, accommodation, improvement, or transformation?
6. How should the need for education change be explained to those who must approve and support it?

All these questions call to the attention of educational stakeholders at all levels. Without thinking about how the needed change will be received and implemented, the situation will remain the same, and the dreamed innovation will be a myth.

### 5.2. Innovation in Education

The world is facing unprecedented challenges (OECD, 2018). Technological development is revolutionizing the whole system at social, economic, and environmental levels (Magusin & Johnson, 2013) since it is an integral part of our daily lives (Harrell & Bynum, 2018). The technological evolution makes future education uncertain because schools cannot comply with the everyday innovations brought in. Many transformations have happened over the years in educational design and delivery around the world. Indeed, the cycle of innovation in education



consists of three steps: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization/continuation (Duke, 2004; Fullan, 2016). From this view, every phase of the innovation cycle in education is relevant; no way to avoid one of the three steps. However, if the policymaker makes changes, it requires a feasibility study to get effective implementation at the school level. In this way, the introduction of Information and Communication Technology does not matter whenever it is not recognized as real-life from the beginning. The implementation of the innovation starts by restating its importance (Fullan, 2016).

The awareness of the rapid advancement of technology and its values is clear from the early 1980s. However, curriculum integration had not progressed simultaneously as technology (Maddux & Johnson, 2005; Saiz-Santos, La Mata, & Hoyos-Iruarrizaga, 2017). Thus, this is the moment to ensure if technology is part of daily life in schools (Saiz-Santos et al., 2017); otherwise, education cannot play its role as a change agent. This idea evokes the need for specific competencies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## 6. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies and Skills

A skill is described as someone's capability to accomplish duties and resolve problems when competence is the capacity to adequately apply learning outcomes in different contexts, including training, employment, and professional development (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009). The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills has developed a framework for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning outcomes. The framework provides a list of competencies expected from students prepared for today's job market (Trilling & Fadel, 2009), which are:

1. The core subjects: 3Rs: Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic
2. Information, Media, and Technology Skills: information literacy (Accessing, analyzing, synthesizing, creating and sharing information from multiple sources), ICT literacy (the capacity to identify and use technology efficiently, effectively, and ethically), Media literacy (also refers to one's ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of formats)
3. Learning and innovation skills, commonly called '4Cs': Critical thinking and problem solving, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity.
4. Life and career skills: here, it is about becoming an independent learner and worker able to adapt to changing situations. It is also the ability to take responsibility and lead others in order to produce results.

Among the 21<sup>st</sup> skills reported above, it is essential to add other skills, like financial and health management, civic responsibilities, and wise choices. Indeed, personal finances and health are skills not considered (Wan & Gut, 2011). The best choice of lifestyle and how to use money are core values in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The current job market does not require functional skills. It requires abilities in negotiation, networking, problem-solving, and process management skills (Tran, 2016). It is also crucial to note these competencies, applied in all disciplines, can help prepare students for employment in a globalized system.

## 7. Curriculum and Employability in a Globalized Environment

Today, it turns out that the university level's academic knowledge would not be enough unless it can help prepare graduates to acquire skills that make them employable. Employers expect to recruit qualified people for the job demand of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Here, curriculum and employability should be inseparable sectors.

### 7.1. Employability

Employability has been defined as: "a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy" (Moreland, 2006). Employability is also defined as how students who have completed their academic program can be integrated into employment at national and international levels (Glover, Law, & Youngman, 2002). It is the skills and abilities that allow someone to be employed. Here, employability is linked to a person's qualities to occupy a job and maintain employment.



Given that employability is about skills and competencies, there is a need for preparation through training. Indeed, educational institutions are the agencies to facilitate communities to achieve their needs (Aloysius, Ismail, Suandi, & Arshad, 2018). There is a high call to make the training received from universities more relevant to fit with the job market requirements. Higher education institutions must train people ready for the job environment and adaptable within it (Tran, 2016). However, there is a gap between academic requirements and graduate employability (Gut, 2011; Thirunavukarasu, Chandrasekaran, Betageri, & Long, 2020). In this perspective, a work-based curriculum must consider international competitiveness and student personal development and the willingness of higher education institutions to shift from their traditional curriculum to allow students access to various learning experiences in another hand (Foster & Stephenson, 1998).

In a global context, the requirement for graduates to operate in varied cultures is increased by globalization and the interconnection of worldwide job markets (Jones, 2013). For Jones, there is a need for the internationalization of higher education around the world. This aspect links curriculum and employability in a globalized environment, the best way to break down barriers among countries and regions. The "Internationalization of the curriculum is the incorporation of international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the content of the curriculum, as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study" (Leask, 2015).

Also, the awareness of the increasing demand for employable graduates will guide how training institutions will impart the abilities and skills required to produce indispensable people for today's society (Coetzee, 2014). Indeed, the rapid changes experienced by the world due to the development of information and communication technologies significantly influence the job market requirements, the employers' expectations, and the profile of the new graduates.

Another issue in employability is job security. For Bagshaw (1997), employability guarantees job security. Indeed, the assurance that a worker has the needed competencies in his job gives him security and tranquility in remaining on his employment for a long time. This assurance can also lead him to compete for higher positions in an environment where the most competitive is the most recruited. To meet the employers' expectations, educational institutions need to adapt academic programs to the industry's needs (Tsitskari et al., 2017).

## 7.2. Employers' Expectations

Employers expect to recruit graduates able to work internationally. To remain competitive in a high-tech and fast-changing environment, employers seek graduates who have: (a) a significant professionalism, (b) an intellectual common sense, (c) an emotional maturity, (d) competence in their domain of specialization, and (e) having competitive techno-functional competencies (Narula & Aithal, 2018). Indeed, "employers are increasingly going global, and hence need graduates who have experience of different countries and cultures and so can deal with overseas customers and clients" (Archer & Davidson, 2008).

Higher education institutions can improve students' employability skills (Watts, 2006). For this reason, higher education institutions must integrate employability into any discipline (Knight & Yorke, 2002, 2004). Indeed, the root of a low level in employability skills among students originates from the dispersed and fragmented way the curriculum is delivered (Ehiyazaryan & Barraclough, 2009). In addition to the instruction, management is regarded as isolating employability from the curriculum (Rae, 2007). In this context, the best way to prepare students for employability is to integrate the real world into curriculum and employability, rather than making them separate entities. The actual world to which students need to be familiar with is currently without border, what makes them global citizens ready to serve wherever they can apply for a job. In this case, students' engagement to acquire employability skills depends on the effectiveness of curriculum mapping, the implementation, delivery, and the support institutions receive from their governing boards. There is a need for collaboration among curriculum stakeholders to produce a curriculum that supports academic learning and employability (Speight, Lackovic, & Cooker, 2013).

## 8. Curriculum without borders: Flexibility and Adaptability

Curriculum studies are often limited within local and national boundaries regarding educational practices



(Carson, 2009). However, a curriculum without borders calls the attention of stakeholders to develop flexibility and adaptability in the curriculum to meet job market requirements. In this perspective, there is no more extended isolation in terms of training. What is required is the training of excellent people able to meet business needs and international integration. Being a system where services, goods, and prices are self-regulated, the free-market situation appears to break down our national boundaries. Today, countries are no longer existing like isolated islands. Indeed, the case believed to be locally installed is now facing challenges worldwide through global cooperation.

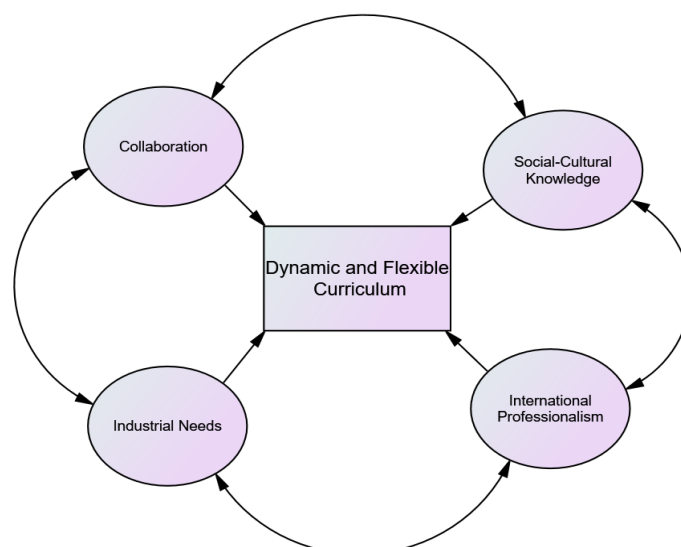
With the growing demand in the free-market system, there is also an increase of cross-border private educational institutions (Portnoi, Rust, & Bagley, 2010). In the proliferation of educational institutions, there is a mobility of students as well as workers. The mobility of students and workers also leads to the advent of the global knowledge economy. At this point, there is a simultaneous consideration of higher training and skills at local, national, and international levels (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). This situation requires stakeholders in the curriculum field to consider and make the curriculum more flexible and adapted to the current trends (OECD, 2018). Indeed, education is always connected with the national government and influenced by cross-border or international facets of activities associated with knowledge (Marginson, 2010). This situation calls top leaders' attention to ensure the curriculum offered within national boundaries is flexible and adapted to the current world's needs without limitations.

The adaptation of a curriculum is consecutive to the continual changes in the job market (Jonker, März, & Voogt, 2020). Also, the need for a dynamic curriculum was emphasized by (McCalla, 1992). He believes a curriculum is a dynamic phenomenon adapted to students' needs, subject matter requirements, and pedagogical objectives. For the author, the key indicators of a timely curriculum are: (a) an adaptation to the environmental context, (b) the flexibility in pedagogical goals, and (c) the individualization according to the student's needs. From a global perspective, curriculum stakeholders must consider that today's underway changes are not specific to a single region, industry, or matter.

They are global, so they need to be addressed worldwide (Schwab, 2018). In this perspective, (McDonald & van der Horst 2007) present a flexible and adapted curriculum as a

1. Curricula that prepare graduates for defined international professions;
2. Curricula leading to internationally recognized professional qualifications;
3. Curricula leading to joint or double degrees that include international studies;
4. Curricula with compulsory components offered at universities abroad;
5. Curricula with an international course or area/language studies;
6. Interdisciplinary programs, like region and area studies, covering more than one country.

The model below summarizes how look-like a flexible and dynamic curriculum that fits with the requirements of the 21st century.



**Figure 1.** Flexible and Dynamic Curriculum Model for the 21st Century

## 9. Conclusion

Globalization makes the world a worldwide village. The business world no longer considers geographical boundaries at both national and international levels. To do this, people in the business ensure their products are as competitive as possible in a global village. There are standardized policies in a globalized culture. However, the educational system is facing issues of competitiveness of their graduates in the job market. The current situation means the school curriculum delivered within academic institutions is likely to be competitive globally. Indeed, no one can claim to do his business in isolation in a system of economic, social, and cultural exchanges. There is a need for education systems to adopt a fair, flexible, and dynamic curriculum according to the needs of society. However, the wrong side is many countries cannot produce graduates ready to seize all the labor market opportunities. Inequalities in academic training are apparent. The Northern countries have a monopoly in this area. Due to globalization, there are winners and losers. The best way to deal with compliance between curriculum offered, the current trends of globalization, and the inequality in academic training is educational stakeholders' involvement at national and international levels. Cooperation between developed and developing countries is highly needed than ever before to train graduates worthy of coping with the 21st century's job market demand from the local to the international level. The author offers a model of dynamic and flexible curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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