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Global Competency of Pupils for Competitiveness in Public Primary School in Rivers State

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Abstract: This paper addresses the issues of global competency amongst public primary school pupils in Rivers State. Education is said to be the bedrock of development, therefore the quality of education given to children at the childhood stage cannot be overemphasized. The education given to the child should make the child globally visible by possessing the requisite competency skills. These global competence skills include the critical thinking, self-awareness, identification of issues, use of varying languages, ability to analyses, synthesize and take action. The paper further highlighted the role caregivers should play in the instilling of these skills in children, However, the challenges of instilling these values and the implications it holds for the teacher were discussed and the way forward suggested.

1. Introduction

Education is an instrument for national development and social change. Children live in diverse cultural environment and are also connected digitally through various technological tools. It is therefore imperative to provide them with necessary skills to cope in an ever-changing society. The National Policy on Education (2014) stipulates the goals of education to include the development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live and contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of the society. The objectives of Primary Education as stated in the FRN (2014) includes the following:

1. Inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively.

2. Lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking

3. Promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity.

4. Instill social norms and values in the child

5. Develop in the child the ability to adapt to changing environment.

6. Provide opportunities for the child to develop manipulative skills that would enable the child to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capabilities.

In the light of the above, it is evident that the quality of education given to the child at the childhood stage cannot be overemphasized and this level of education serves as the bedrock for further educational advancement. Developing economy, digital and

environmental forces influences children   lives around the world, and increases their intercultural interactions on a daily basis. Hence, the need to deliberately inculcate the requisite global competence skills in children (NEA, 2010).

The government of Nigeria at various times has ensured that children and youths get broad based education by creating appropriate avenues for them to interact and develop appropriate skills. Examples of such opportunities created include the establishment of the Federal Unity Schools and the introduction of the National youth service Corps by the Federal Government of Nigeria to enhance their perspectives of others. For some time now in public primary schools in Rivers State there has been no state organized debates, quiz competitions and workshops for pupils unlike their counterparts in unity schools that recently had their Fedcol games which held in Lagos in December, 2022 and regular workshops and sensitization on global issues such as Day of the Girl Child, World literacy Day, Environment Day and other such similar programs. However, pupils ought to acquire not only national skills but also acquire global competency skills that would make them stand out in the society. The purpose of this paper is to explore the global competence skills that can be inculcated in children and the implications of Global competence on childhood educators.

2.   Materials and Methods

The research employed a qualitative approach to explore the dynamics and challenges of inclusive and sustainable education within the context of the specific case study. The study was conducted using a combination of interviews, participant observations, and document analysis to gather comprehensive data from various stakeholders, including educators, students, and policymakers. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives, while the observations provided contextual insights into the educational environment and practices. The document analysis focused on policy documents, curriculum materials, and other relevant institutional records to triangulate the findings and ensure the reliability of the data.

Data collection was followed by a rigorous process of thematic analysis, where recurring themes and patterns were identified and analyzed to understand the underlying issues and factors influencing inclusive and sustainable education. The analysis was conducted iteratively, with initial findings being refined through subsequent rounds of data collection and analysis. This approach enabled the researchers to develop a nuanced understanding of the subject matter, highlighting both the successes and challenges faced by the educational institutions in implementing inclusive and sustainable practices. The study's findings were then contextualized within the broader literature on education, providing a comprehensive discussion on the implications for policy and practice.

3.   Results and Discussion
Childhood Education

Learning occurs from birth till death, the day a man stops to learn is the day the man dies. Every society that needs to grow and develop should pay attention to what the children are learning and the skills they acquire during this stage of their development. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014) sees childhood education as the education given to the child from birth to 12yrs.This

period of the Childs life is characterized by rapid growth and development. (Echebe, 2019 & Anero, 2018). Childhood education is saddled with the responsibility of enhancing the potentials of the head, the heart and hands of child. It is a child-centered program that adopts the play way, exploratory and experimental methods as modes of instruction for the child at this stage. It recognizes the individual differences that exist amongst pupils and makes effort to spur children to work at their pace to avoid boredom of loss of interest.

Global Competence

Global competitiveness refers to the production of quality product that brings satisfaction to the end user. This view is in line with Aigboye Anolu and Ibhafididon (2016) that opined that global competiveness is the ability of nations to supply high quality goods and services to the public at a reduced price. In education, for individuals to be able to compete favorably, there is the need to acquire requisite skills to enhance the capacity to be globally competitive. A globally competitive child should possess the competency skills that would make the identify issues within his/her environment and make conscious effort to proffer solutions to those issues. Global competence is the enhancing of the educational system to prepare future generations to acquire the knowledge to adapt and contribute meaningfully to their environment. Deardoff (2014) argued that global competence is a complex learning goal that needs to be made concrete by breaking it down, so it can be assessed. Global competency demands that pupils are   knowledgeable about global and current events and this would be achieved if there are globally competent teachers that would bring them up to speed and show them that the world is interconnected (Deardoff, 2014& Iris et al., 2021).

In the view of Reimers (2009) global competence has three key dimensions, the first dimension is the positive approach, the second is the ability to interact in foreign languages and the third knowledge of the history and geography of the world around the child with a strong integration of global health care practices, climate change, politics and international relations. The positive approach in this regard is to understand the cultural differences that exist among the people within the child's environment and the ability of the child to engage such differences that abound with a view to foster long lasting relationships. One sure way to achieve this is if pupils become versed in speaking different languages, then communication barriers will be broken and understanding is fostered. In corroborating this assertion, the Asian Society (2018) outlined the following as key components of Global competence and they include:

(i) Investigate the world beyond their immediate environment by examining issues of local, global and cultural significance.

(ii) Recognize, understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others.

(iii) Communicate ideas with diverse audiences by engaging in open, appropriate and effective interactions across cultures.

(iv) Take action for the collective wellbeing for sustainable development.

In examining issues of local, global and cultural significance, a wide range of issues that affect pupils should be discussed, they include poverty, hunger and cultural differences that exist among people and utilize the knowledge and skills gotten from the sciences, mathematics, agriculture, civic and moral education to proffer solutions to problems facing the world in their little corner by asking the relevant questions. In appreciating the world views of others, learning the history, beliefs, values and practices

of other people can aid in the understanding of how the views they hold and the views of others go along way shape the environment we live in.

OECD (2018) asserts that Global competence is the capacity to analyze global and intercultural issues critically and from view points, to understand how these differences affect perceptions, judgments, and ideas of self and others, and to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with others from different backgrounds on the basis of a shared respect for human dignity. Asian Society (2011) agrees with the views of (OECD, 2018) which views global competence as the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues that are of global significance. PISA (2018) stated that global competence involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes to live in a changing world. Global competence is the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance that would enable children take positive action to cope with emerging challenges. This shows that the concept of global competency emphasizes the skills, knowledge and attitudes that children require in fast changing world.

Global Competency Skills

Several researchers have suggested many skills that are referred to as global competence skills. Global competence skills are critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation. Mansilla & Jackson (2018) outlined these as global competence skills, they include identification of issues, use of varying languages, analysis and synthesis of global questions and the development of arguments based on compelling evidence that takes into consideration different perspectives before conclusions are drawn. Critical thinking in the 21st century is described as the "ability to design and manage projects, solve problems, and make effective decisions using a variety of tools and resources" (Fullan, 2013 & NEA, 2010). OECD (2018) opined that global competence includes a variety of skills that should be enhanced to enable the child to become competent. These skills range from critical thinking and analytical thinking, self-awareness, curiosity, valuing differences and communication.

(i) **Critical Thinking:** Critical thinking provides children with the opportunity to evaluate their thoughts and actions and see how it influences the knowledge or perspectives the children have on global issues. In line with this view, Brown & Keeley (2019) view critical thinking as a form of reflective thinking that is aimed at analyzing and assessing information through the use of logic and reasoning. It develops confidence in children as they become deliberate in making decisions and taking actions on global issues. OECD (2018) further asserted that globally competent should also demonstrate analytical and critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills are used for evaluating the worth of any material on the basis of its consistency with evidence and with one's own knowledge and experience. Analytical thinking refers to the capacity to tackle a problem by using a systematic method. This involves the ability to interpret the meaning of words, concepts and issues, then examine the relationship that exist in bid to find out the connections and discrepancies. To help children to be critically minded.

(ii) **Curiosity**: children are curious in nature, able to have this strong desire to explore their environment, the teacher can enhance this skill by providing opportunities for the children to satisfy their curiosity by adopting experimental method of instruction, taking children to places of interest that arouse their minds to ask fundamental questions as regards the environment in which they live in.

(iii) **Self-Awareness:** Is the ability to understand and monitor one's emotions and reactions. The child that has self-awareness would understand the strength and weakness he/she possesses. The child would also be able to assess his/her mental, physical and emotional state as he interacts with people globally. A person who is aware of the larger global environment also understands that people's decisions have an impact on people outside of their own country or region. Smith, Cowie & Blades (2005) articulated that the child's understanding of his own self plays a significant role on how he would see others in course of their interaction.

(iv) **Valuing Differences:** Children should be assisted to understand different perspectives, understanding that they have much to learn from people who have different experiences. This calls for the capability to recognize different viewpoints on urgent global issues as well as the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of individuals from many cultures. It is possible to participate in constructive and respectful cross-cultural connections when one is aware of, appreciates, and willing to tolerate cross-cultural differences.

Furthermore, Mansilla and Jackson (2018) asserted that a global competent child should possess these competence skills, they are issue identification, use of varying languages, analysis, synthesis and developing of arguments. The child should identify a pressing issue within the locality of the child and be able to connect these issues to the global space to ascertain the connectivity that exist between these issues. In addition, generate questions and explain the significance of the questions both locally and globally.

The global competent child should be versed in the use of varying various languages to communicate. When the child is proficient in different languages, understanding the different perspectives on a global issue and communication of same would not be an issue again. In Nigerian curriculum, efforts have been made to ensure children are versed in different languages with the teaching of the major languages Yoruba, Ibo. Hausa in addition to the foreign language taught such as French.

The Need for Global Competence Skills

It is significant to acquire global competence skills in the 21st century due to its enormous benefit to pupils and teachers. Students need global competence skills in terms of the knowledge and skills that help them comprehend global events and respond to them effectively. The growing calls for the nations education systems to keep up the pace with changing times is unconnected to the strong desire to optimize learning, using technological innovations to deepen teaching and learning. The children we have at the moment are referred to as digital natives because they are born into a technological world and this makes them demand an educational system that is connected and relevant to their everyday lives (Levy & Murnane, 2004; Dede, 2010).

Implications for Childhood Educators

From the foregoing it is important to note that to provide pupils with the requisite global competence skills, the teachers in the childhood education centers needs to possess these skills as well. Hence, the burden on childhood educators.

(i) **Changing world**: Pupils live in an ever-changing world, it is therefore important to for teachers to help them acquire the values, skills and attitude to cope with such circumstances.

(ii) **Transfer of Knowledge**: Educators should assist pupils to transfer the knowledge of science, math, arts and social studies that they have acquired to solving problems

within their locality. Benebo-Solomon (2014) opined that the ability of pupils to transfer knowledge is the essence of education as pupils are provided the opportunity to positively transfer knowledge by drawing up similarities between concepts, principles and skills on global issues.

(iii) **Creating of Opportunities:** teachers should create opportunities within the classroom space to ensure that pupils are actively engaged during lessons and have ample time to reflect deeply on what they have been taught rather than just the acquisition of knowledge.

(iv) **Establishing Class Cultures**: The teacher is the facilitator of learning in the classroom, it behooves on the teacher to create a culture in the classroom that is devoid of fear and is safe for the pupils. The pupils would be free to express themselves ask questions, are able to disagree with the views of others while stating the reasons for doing so. They have the opportunity to critically analyze the information acquired from different sources.

Challenges of Achieving Global Competence

In inculcating global competence in children, several challenges came to fore. Foremost was the lack of integration of global competence skills in the curriculum, lack of self-awareness, understanding what competencies are and inappropriate use of instructional methods.

Firstly, one of the challenges of achieving global competence is the issue of integrating global competence skills such as critical thinking, self-awareness amongst others in the curriculum delivery process. Some educators would desire a separate curriculum for inculcating these skills as they see as burdensome or a distraction in achieving instructional objectives. Secondly, lack of self-awareness on the part of pupils and teachers as well constitute a challenge in attaining global competence. Pupils should be helped to be aware of their beliefs, thought process and provided with ample time to reflect. The self-awareness of pupils would only be achieved if the educators also see it as a critical part of the teaching and learning process. On the hand, pupils would not have a deep knowledge about the world they live and the connectivity that exits amongst people due to lack of self-awareness. More concerning is the inaccurate adoption of instructional strategy in inculcating global competence. The method adopted should be a multidisciplinary in approach to be able to show the connection of what is being thought to global issues and trends.

4. Conclusion

Giving the changing world that children live in at the moment which is quite different from other eras there is need to equip them with global competence skills such as critical thinking, self-awareness, valuing diversity and identification of Issues. These aforementioned can only be achieved if children are taught by teachers who are globally competent only then can they understand the world around them and contribute meaningfully to the society after having deep reflections on their actions and in actions on the society.

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