

Development of Graduate Education Programs in the Age of Broken Borders

Risper A. Awuor & David Parks

Abstract

We live in Friedman's (2006) flat world with goods, services, ideas, people, and culture flooding across borders. There is increased social consciousness and a new awareness of the vulnerabilities and responsibilities of the nations that once felt secure behind closed borders. Borders are symbolic or real demarcations that restrict, define, enclose, isolate, separate, protect, constrain, blind, and limit. As physical borders fade, the impact of its degeneration on graduate education programs is clear. In this paper we present four of the major concepts that have changed the context of graduate education programs in the era of broken borders. Among the concepts that describe an evolving context of schooling that policy makers and practitioners at all levels of the educational enterprise in all parts of the world are dealing with are digitization, globalization, complexification, and cosmopolitanization. We describe and draw implications of each for schooling and the preparation of educational leaders, particularly at the graduate level. The implications are clear for those in educational faculties that it is time to embrace the digital revolution; and develop programs of study that integrate distance education components, mentorships, face-to-face instruction, student-to-student interaction, and cultural emersion. The influence of these concepts cannot be ignored by our educational systems. It is a reality that we must confront in the schools and classrooms at all levels. Preparation programs for school leaders should incorporate studies of this force that is restructuring and reforming the thinking of peoples throughout the world in order for children to live locally, but be able to think globally.

Key Words: *Broken borders, cosmopolitanization, globalization, graduate education*

Introduction

Friedman's (2006) flat world suggests that free flow of communications across the globe has increased social consciousness and there is a new awareness of the vulnerabilities and responsibilities of the nations that once felt secure behind closed borders. This environment of change and awareness presents faculties of education with opportunities to recreate their graduate programs for a future that is very different from the past. In this paper we present a set of principles on which this reconsideration might be based. We believe that our analysis of the environment and the principles that we derived from it will be useful in helping others think through their own perspectives and the direction that graduate work in faculties of education may take.

The University Continuing Education Association (UCEA), in the United States was originally designed to serve the needs of working adults who seem to come in distinct categories (cohorts). Some continuing education students take courses to stay abreast with new developments in their field as they seek to enhance their upward mobility. Still others are there simply because they like learning. Continuing education while keeping your job is an educational choice that the Graduate Education program at Asia Pacific International University embraces. The program's chosen mode of delivery is the blended approach, where coursework begins before (usually one to two weeks) followed by a short period of intensive face-to-face classroom setting interaction and continues after for about another two months or so, to cover a full semester of work. Face-to-face lecturer/student time amounts to 15 hours for one credit, while independent work time amounts to 45-60 hours for one credit. With this mode of graduate program offering, participants are expected to complete the pre and post-assignments which are geared towards developing their mastery and competencies in the various courses.

The Changing Social, Economic, and Political Context of Graduate Education

The context of education generally and graduate education specifically is changing rapidly. Among the concepts that describe an evolving context of schooling that policy makers and practitioners at all levels of the educational enterprise in all parts of the world are digitization, globalization, complexification, and cosmopolitanization. We describe and draw implications of each for schooling and the preparation of educational leaders, particularly at the graduate level.

Digitization

At anytime, anywhere, digital age is flooding across an inter-connected, flattened Friedman (2005) world. The Medieval concept of graduate education has given way to the 21st century concept of infinite knowledge stored digitally with unlimited access, transmitted instantly by a network of interconnected computers, and mediated by thousands—if not millions—of contributors, critics, revisionists, experts, and potential knowledge saboteurs (Downes, Siemens & Cormier, 2008; Fabunmi, Paris, & Fabunmi, 2009; Picciano, 2012; Dodd, 2014). Many universities currently network with other universities across the globe. By 2014, Udacity, founded by Thrun had 16 partnerships, while Coursera which was founded by Daphne Koller and Andrew had 107 partners from around the world.

Several universities currently convert hard copies of theses and dissertations to electronic copies that are accessible to many interested users regardless of where one is geographically located in the world. Other universities such as Gothenburg University stopped requiring dissertations in the traditional format of chapter many years ago. Instead they require manuscripts that are published and shared digitally with other interested readers the world over. Digitization is an essential task not only in modern day libraries but also in every graduate school/college, because of the current need to provide online services.

The vision of a worldwide digital source of all knowledge, from the wisdom of the ancients to the latest studies in any field, is becoming a reality as libraries and publishers partner with Google Book Search (Google, 2005, 2006) to digitize their holdings. E-books “are available to be read electronically on a variety of devices, including traditional computers, iPads, Amazon’s Kindle, Barnes & Noble’s Nook, Sony e-readers, iPhones; and are also available as e-audio books” Columbia University Libraries, n.d., para. 1).

Digitized information, available anywhere at any time, fits the life styles and preferences of the digital generation with their wireless multifunction telephones and handheld digital devices. E-learning is progressing and may be expected to continue to evolve as characteristics of the users change (Perna, Ruby, Boruch, Wang,, Scull, Ahmad and Evans, 2014). Any graduate program that does not consider digitization of learning materials is remaining behind and may soon find itself out of the global competition for students. While the quality of online degrees left much to be desired during their early days, their attributes have steadily improved over the past few years, as have their pedigrees. As the demand continues to grow for online graduate programs, it is possible to imagine a future with doctoral students obtaining terminal degrees online from almost any university in the world regardless of where they live (Blackman, 2012).

In 2006 there were over three million people pursuing degrees online in such fields as business, education, engineering, library science, nursing, and public health (“Education online”, 2006). As digitized information expands and delivery systems become more user-friendly and interactive, the necessity for only face-to-face—teacher-to-student—instruction is rapidly declining. The implications are clear for those in educational faculties that it is time to join the digital revolution; and develop programs of study that integrate distance education components, mentorships, face-to-face instruction, student-to-student interaction, and cultural emersion.

Globalization

The view that the world is everyone’s homeland, although expressed by those who believe in international social justice, is not popular in most countries. The nation with its political-geographical borders is the preferred state of affairs, (Vaira, 2004). Given their preferences, ethnic groups would carve out their small plots of territory for self-government. Examples are easy to identify: the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia into small nation-states; the establishment of Israel as a nation; territorial tribal wars in Africa; the division of South Africa into homelands; the continuing attempts of the French Canadians to establish their own territory in Quebec; the tensions among the ethnic and religious groups in Iraq; the division of Crete

between Greeks and Turks; the separation of Pakistan from India; the division of Eritrea from Ethiopia and a recent separation of South Sudan from northern territory. In spite of these preferences; disparities in social, economic, political, and religious conditions, coupled with worldwide information technologies, are opening the minds and fueling the aspirations of those who are becoming aware of their conditions and the disparities between their lives and the lives of others in more advantaged places. This new awareness and these new aspirations are putting pressure on all types of borders that have been put in place to restrict the flow of people; goods; ideas; technologies; crime; poverty; terrorism; and religious, social, and political ideologies.

Borders are symbolic or real demarcations that restrict, define, enclose, isolate, separate, protect, constrain, blind, and limit. Border controls worked until the middle to late 20th century, when new technologies became available and cheap enough to transport people, goods, and ideas throughout the world. Eyes were opened; minds were awakened; aspirations were heightened; and political, geographical, economic, social, as well as ideational borders were crossed. As physical borders fade, the notions of one-world, one economy, one government, and one people grows in the psyches of all inhabitants of the planet Earth.

In line with the divergent theory of globalization, Goldberg and Pavcnik (2007) argue that different countries experience globalization in different ways and at different times. They reckon that from a policy point of view, attempts to alleviate the potentially adverse distributional effects of globalization should be grounded in a careful study of the nature of globalization and the individual circumstances in each country. However, in recent times, due to the same globalization phenomena, what happens in the individual country is hardly contained within the borders of that country.

Globalization is a powerful, grassroots movement that will not go away. Once people get a taste of freedom from lives of daily drudgery, repression, and poverty, there is no turning back. This has been demonstrated by the uprising in the Arab world: Egypt, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, and many others as the citizens in the countries demand democracy. The sheer numbers of people putting pressure on borders of all types will cause them to gradually fade and dissipate, perhaps leading to greater equity across peoples and individuals. The awareness of a global society and how educational institutions do not only serve students from their locales is paramount in the development of graduate programs. The knowledge gained from graduate programs is no longer only applicable in the community in which the institution which confers the degree resides. Institutions of higher learning serve a wider community, not restricted by geographical borders.

Complexification

Complexification is a term that combines the stresses of modern life that surround us every day and are found in the family, the job, the world political climate, the weather, technologies, the economy, conflicting social ideologies and movements, and the increasing diversity of persons inhabiting our neighborhoods. Tertiary institutions and specifically graduate programs must produce graduates who understand the complexification of life and the role that education can play in helping children and adults cope with the stresses and consequences of progressive complexification. While graduate students cannot remove some of the stressful events from their lives, graduate programs should incorporate lessons that help manage stress or that help the graduate students make wise decisions on how to deal with stressful situations (Girdano, Dusek & Everly, 2005). While we cannot remove the stressful events from our lives, we can adjust the way we react to these events. We will be able to perform at a more productive level and feel better about ourselves if we can bring high levels of stress to a more manageable level. While we cannot remove the stressful events from our lives, we can adjust the way we react to these events. We will be able to perform at a more productive level and feel better about ourselves if we can bring high levels of stress to a more manageable level. The programs must include broad preparation in the disciplines if the future thinkers, researchers, and leaders in education are to reform the educational system to accommodate the effects of social, economic, and political complexities. To be true to ourselves, all these may not be possible without the development of character and a strong values systems as well as a desire to be "my brother's keeper!" As such, the success of graduate programs depends, to a large extent, on the foundation laid in the elementary, high schools and undergraduate programs in different parts of the world; adding to the complexification of the role of tertiary institutions, and in particular the graduate education programs.

Cosmopolitanization

Cosmopolitanization is the seeping of globalism into the minds and behaviors of individuals without

them even knowing it. Cosmopolitanization today infiltrates lives through the internationalization of media and the Internet. Famine, genocide, tribal war, political assassinations, terrorist atrocities, maltreatment of prisoners, Katrina and Sandy-like hurricanes or typhoons, and incidences like Virginia Tech or the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, or even the more recent Boko Haram gunmen attack on a girls' dormitory in Yobe town of Gujba Nigeria as well as the courage acts demonstrated by Malala Yousafzai in defense of girls' education are experiences that know no borders and cannot be contained within nations. This awareness of others is the essence of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitans have multiple identities (Rantanen, 2005). They identify themselves with a nation-state or nation-states. They are members of groups that have international constituents or missions. Such individuals cross social, economic, political, cultural borders with relative ease. They think and act locally and globally.

Cosmopolitanization cannot be ignored by our educational systems. It is a reality that we must confront in the schools and classrooms at all levels. Preparation programs for school leaders should incorporate studies of this force that is restructuring and reforming the thinking of peoples throughout the world. Learners may live locally, but they must be able to think globally. Cosmopolitans identify with, empathize with, and act in accord with their membership in the cosmos. They must be members of nation-states with their patriotic fervor and nationalism, but they are part of humanity as well. Education has the obligation of developing the personal reflexivity needed to develop a clear understanding of an individual's multiple identities (Rantanen, 2005). It is recorded in the Bible that we are in the world but not of the world (John 17:14). The best universities are focusing the attention of their professors and programs in education on two purposes: (1) producing graduates who have a global perspective and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work for the benefit of all children and society within educational institutions and their diverse environments and (2) directly creating, interpreting, using, and assessing knowledge that contributes to improving the lives of all children, families, and others in general, wherever they may be on the globe.

A national perspective alone is no longer adequate. The economic, political, and social lives of nations depend on the development of people worldwide. The Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) which includes Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam is possibly an influence of both cosmopolitanism and globalization. The organization of the European Union is another example of such influence. The attempts of the African presidents to form the United African States is also a demonstration of such influence.

Educators have to prepare graduates who know and understand the dynamics of globalism and their implications for the curriculum in the schools. Globalism requires knowledge, skills, and dispositions far different from those of the industrial-modern era on which the curriculum of American schooling, which is imitated by many developing countries, is based. Classrooms in the globalized world have become a melting pot of various cultures which include different world views, religious beliefs, values, abilities, and languages (Saban, 2013). Graduate classrooms should be venues where individuals have the freedom to think otherwise and not be mere reflectors of their professors' thoughts. Graduates from doctoral and masters of education programs in tertiary institutions must be prepared to create a new vision of schooling and articulate, implement, steward, and continuously evaluate and modify it as conditions change. It is inevitable that critical thinking should be an integral part of the curricula of graduate education in the "flat world". To remove critical thinking from the list of desired outcomes of tertiary education, especially graduate program is a blatant demonstration of lack of vision for the kind of graduates the world needs.

In conclusion, regardless of the attitudes of the graduate program directors and leaders of higher education institutions, the broken borders as well as the evolved context of schooling dictate that the concepts of digitization, globalization, complexification and cosmopolitanization should not be ignored when developing graduate education program.

References

- Berliner, D. C. (2006). Toward a future as rich as our past. In C. M. Golde & G. E. Walker (Eds.), *Envisioning the future of doctoral education: Preparing stewards of the discipline* (1st ed.). *Carnegie essays on the doctorate*, p. 450. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Blackman, S. (2012). *The lowdown on the online MBA*. Retrieved from <http://EzineArticles.com/7184958>
- Dodd, D. (<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/are-scholars-or-executives-best-suited-to-lead-universities/20140478.article>) January 17, 2014

-
- Downes, S., Siemens, G., and Cormier (2009). *Personal Learning Environments, Networks and Knowledge*. Columbia University Libraries. (n.d.). *E-Resources*. Retrieved from <http://library.columbia.edu/eresources/ebooks.html>
- Education online. (2006, October 16). *U. S. News & World Report*, 141, 62-66, 68-69, 70-72.
- Fabunmi, B.A., Paris, M., & Fabunmi, M. (2006). Digitization of library resources: Challenges and implications for policy and planning. *International Journal of African & African American Studies*, 5(2), 23-36.
- Friedman, T. L. (2005). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century* (1st ed.). New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Friedman, T. L. (2006). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century* (1st updated and expanded ed.). New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Girdano, D., Dusek, D. E., & Everly, G. S. Jr. (2012). *Controlling stress and tension* (9th ed.). USA: Benjamin Cummings.
- Goldberg, P. K., & Pavcnik, N. (2007). *Distributional effects of globalization in developing countries* (No. w12885). National bureau of economic research.
- Google. (2005). *Library project – An enhanced card catalog of the world’s books*. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com/googleprint/library.html>
- Google. (2006). *Google book search: News and views: History of google book search*. Retrieved from <http://www.google.com/googlebooks/newsviews/history.html>
- Picciano, A. G. (2012). The evolution of Big Data and Analytics in American Higher Education, 16(3). *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*.
- Rantanen, T. (2005). Cosmopolitanization-now! An interview with Ulrich Beck. *Global Media and Communication*, 1(3), 247-263.
- Richardson, V. (2006). Stewards of a field, stewards of an enterprise: The doctorate in education. In C. M. Golde & G. E. Walker (Eds.), *Envisioning the future of doctoral education: Preparing stewards of the discipline* (1st ed., Vol. Carnegie essays on the doctorate, pp. xviii, 450 p.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Vaira, M. (2004). Globalization and higher education organizational change: A framework for analysis. *Higher Education*, 48(4), p. 483-510.

About the Authors

Dr. Risper Akelo Awuor is dean and a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Psychology, Asia-Pacific International University, Thailand.

Dr. David Parks is a Professor Emeritus of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA.