Popular Culture in Asia: Globalization, Regionalization, and Localization

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Abstract

In the age of globalization, our societies are subject to the process of unprecedented changes. Global forces have impacts on local values and cultures as well. Popular culture is also under the influence of new changes. The line between what is local and what is global is becoming indistinct. No country can ignore the influences of the new events. The impact of globalization in our daily life is serious. It brings about both opportunities and threats. Within this new context, the role of universities is of great importance. They should anticipate these new factors and develop appropriate strategies. Finding the right equilibrium between our universal and local undertakings is a challenging task. If we act properly, we can utilize this new situation at the service of our societies.

Popular Culture and New Changes

We live in the age of globalization. Our societies are subject to the process of unprecedented change. Global forces produce thoughts and ideas, real or false, associated with their products and have impacts on local values and cultures. Popular culture, the people’s culture, is also under the influence of new changes. Popular culture is determined by every day interactions, needs and desires. In many countries local cultures have faded and have been replaced with a kind of culture which has been brought about by the mass media and with the use of global patterns.

In some countries, people receive foreign influences passively. The popular culture in large part is influenced by industries that disseminate cultural material, for example the film, television and publishing industries, as well as the news media. It is the result of a continuing interaction between those industries and the people of the society who consume their products. These new changes have had various impacts on all aspects of our life, including eating habits and tastes of the people and the life of the academic community. In fact, the line between what is local and what is global is becoming ambiguous. In an ideal picture, the world should be like a colorful mosaic which is formed with different culture. Culture is not a static phenomenon; rather it is a flowing and dynamic river which is constantly being generated.

Today many people have access to similar information and in this global culture; each nation should defend its own identity due to the fact that this newly emerging is not a fair one. A global culture is becoming dominant. What is for sure is that no country can release itself from the influence of these new changes and pretend to be an independent island. Surely, all these have had their impacts on traditional cultures.

The profit-making nature of the companies that produce and sell items of popular culture attempt to maximize their profits by emphasizing broadly appealing items and spreading them throughout the world. The impact of
globalization in our daily ways of life and in particular on the culture of higher education is serious. It brings about both a valuable opportunity and a threat as well. Globalization raises a series of issues that our society has to face. As problems become more and more complex, they require multidisciplinary approaches. The traditional institutions and methods in some cases are not efficient enough to cope with these new challenges. Consequently, this calls for redefining the programs.

Globalization means a new space in which other social relations are organized and important dimensions of our lives in society are planned. Everyone has realized that our life does not cease to exist at the borders of our society and it should be considered within a global context as well. Globalization has created an interconnected world. It is a reality that can not be ignored. The consequences of new prevailing relationships are both negative and positive. Within this new context, the functions of traditional universities will be changed. It opens new horizons before the students. There are many barriers blocking the flow of using new facilities in many developing countries. To cope with these challenges, universities need to be adaptive. We have already entered a new age which is knowledge-based age and for this very reason, the universities play important roles as our societies enter this era. Many of the existing programs are becoming less relevant to the requirements of scientific societies. Universities must anticipate these new factors and develop appropriate strategies and make adequate investments.

We must transform ourselves from faculty-centered to learner-centered institutions, becoming more responsive to the society. Internalization needs long term planning. The re-engineering of educational process and introducing quality based programs is a good starting point. The globalization of higher education poses questions about accountability. Higher education institutions must be equipped and prepared to implement necessary changes. The paradigm of change is an inevitable fact in the age of globalization. Universities have to find new sources of financing. Globalization has brought about the commercialization of higher education. They are becoming more customer-oriented. Modern universities are more flexible in their curricula and responsive to the needs of the market in a competitive environment.

Students also are looking for universities outside their national borders and accredited universities are trying to recruit international students. In this age, human capital is the source of prosperity. It can be an opportunity for the traditional universities to standardize the quality of their education. The universities should produce a kind of knowledge that enables us to have access to new technologies. The communication infrastructure needs to be updated to keep pace with the new development and there is still a lot to be done. If we act properly, we can utilize these new facilities at the service of our society. One possible way is to use the private sector and to increase ties with foreign partners.

Maintaining traditional values has become a very difficult task. The growing bureaucracy, unfair distribution of financial resources, and lack of sufficient training about new equipment are part of a slowing trend. It would be a priority for developing countries to concentrate their efforts on new technologies with long term planning. These new phenomena, i.e. globalization, have brought in new challenges on various fronts. The chances of higher learning have never been so encouraging. This quick progress will unquestionably require something new for higher education. It is both an opportunity and a crisis at the same time. A profound reform is necessary. Internationalization is a simple but effective response to globalization. Globalization raises a series of issues that universities have to face. The state is no longer the center of the higher education system. The demand for higher education increases with the rate of population.

Universities can help nations to achieve certain goals. Today, courses as well as students are movable. International interdependence is not an option, but a reality of life. Governments see universities as being one of the driving forces of globalization. The role of higher education is to equip society. Knowledge is the main driver of growth. The technology poses the real danger of a growing digital divide between and within nations. Social and economic progress is achieved principally through the advancement and application of knowledge. Developing countries are at the risk of being further marginalized in a highly competitive world economy.

There is no blue print that is valid for all countries. Globalization is neither the cause of troubles nor is it the sole path towards success. It seems that globalization has put its emphasis more on financial considerations at the expense of cultural considerations. It is a phenomenon that presents humanity with troubles as well as opportunities. Finding the right equilibrium between our universal and local undertakings is a challenging task. Higher education should be governed by its specific set of rules. Knowledge opens new horizons before the eyes of the human beings, extends the images and consequently produces capable graduates. A learned graduate can become a source of development to overcome different challenges.
Globalization and the Iranian society

The Iranian society has changed significantly as a result of the spread of higher education centers. It has provided the Iranian with an opportunity to prove their capabilities. Both men and woman have really realized their true positions and have used this opportunity in the most efficient ways. Higher education has served as a basic mechanism towards capacity building, created positive new waves, and promoted the culture of the society.

These meaningful changes indicate that the authorities of Iranian higher education system have understood their potential and want to put it into effect. Higher education has provided the Iranian people with an insight into the range of life, extended their understanding and helped them change their social roles. The active presence of new generation in the universities and higher education centers has become one of the key features of the modern way of Iranian life. Higher education has paved way for young men and women to flourish their talents.

The higher education system of Iran has undergone fundamental changes to create a balance between the academic programs of the universities and the new realities of the world. In recent years, many meaningful changes have taken place to prepare capable and flexible graduates who can solve the problems of the society and be competitive on the international scale.

Internationalization does not mean simply being a recipient or a provider. We must find areas of collaboration where we can act as partners with different organizations and interact in a mutually beneficial way. Since higher education has the greatest influence in shaping the various aspects of any society, acquaintance with and introduction of different educational systems would undoubtedly provide opportunities to enhance the efficiency of management and educational planning. Universities should be prepared for the new phenomena.

If universities are to survive as intellectual institutions, they must pay close attention to their core responsibilities of teaching, learning, and research. Maintaining loyalty to traditional academic values will not be easy, but the costs of growing commercialization are much greater. Governments and other public authorities need to give the universities the support they need to fulfill their mission. The developing countries have special academic needs that must be taken into consideration.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of globalization is real. We should prepare ourselves to face it logically. On the basis of our rich cultural heritage, we are able to receive the positive aspects of globalization. Passive confrontation will not promote our popular culture. We should interact with this new reality and promote our culture. The new generation has new demands and we have to reconsider the methods of presenting education. Universities can play a dynamic role in portraying this new procedure in the most realistic way. We should cultivate our values and help our new generation face actively vis-à-vis globalization phenomena. Thank you for your patience and listening.

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