

In-Service Teachers' Knowledge of Significant Global Events/Issues: Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs in Developing Countries

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Abstract

In this era of globalisation, it is imperative that teachers are adequately prepared to function effectively in a challenging global environment. The challenges of globalisation demands teachers who are competent, effective, and dynamic in their orientation. This paper presents a report of a study that examines the existing knowledge of in-service teachers in the University of Botswana, of some significant global issues/events. Five hundred in-service teachers were randomly selected from across 100-400 levels of study and across the three main teaching specializations: arts/humanities, sciences and social sciences. An instrument tagged "Knowledge of Significant Global Events/Issues Test" with a reliability coefficient of 0.92 was used for data collection. Three research questions were addressed and data collected was analysed using mean scores, t-test, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results indicates a generally poor knowledge of the global issues examined among the teachers, with a majority of them scoring below average (64.2% below 50). Also, course of study and level of study were found to significantly influence the in-service teachers' knowledge of the global issues in question, while gender has no significant effect on the knowledge scores. The implications of the findings for teacher preparation programmes in Botswana and other developing countries were discussed with a major recommendation on curricular review to accommodate emerging issues in globalisation.

Introduction

The advent of globalisation has radicalized the content of most disciplines with new and emerging global issues coming within the curriculum. Globalisation, couple with information technologies have reduced the barrier in information sharing around the world. What used to be a local event or occurrence before now have global dimensions and implications. As observed by Mansaray and Amosun (2002) "there is now universality of particularism, and particularisation of universalism". A local event that occurred in a part of the world, like the "Hurricane Katrina" in the U.S, has a global dimension and implications for the rest of the world. For example, the people that lost their lives are not only Americans, but from different parts of the world. Another significant implication of the Katrina for the rest of the world is the high rise in the cost

of fuel all over the world. Similarly, it is correct to state that we are in the era of information explosion, where new information keeps on pouring in daily, rendering old ones obsolete and outdated.

The implication of this background for teacher education programme and general teaching and learning is overwhelming. In the first instance, teachers' deals with pupils' realities, and since these realities keeps on changing, the content of the teacher education curriculum must also keep abreast of the changes. Two, those who aspire to teach the children must as a matter of necessity also keep abreast of the current realities in the global environment. It is therefore expected that apart from having a good grasp of methods of teaching, teachers should also demonstrate an equally good knowledge of the content, especially those that have global perspectives. The contention here is that the child is being prepared for the global community; hence, the teachers should demonstrate a good knowledge of current global issues and events. It is in this regard that the study was conceived to measure the knowledge of primary school teachers in Botswana who are in the in-service programme in the university on some significant global issues or events.

Literature Review

Globalisation is the issue that matter most in today's world. Global issues according to (UNAID, 2005) concern us all and are at the heart of many valuable learning experiences (doc.6). Issues such as environmental sustainability, health, peace building and human rights focus students' attention on contemporary events and how they affect our lives at a local and global level. Globalisation is about the greater movement of people, good, capital and ideas due to increased economic integration which in turn is propelled by increased trade and investment. It is like moving towards living in a borderless world (USAID, 2005, doc. 178).

There has always been a sharing of goods, services, knowledge and cultures between people and countries, but in recent years improved technologies and a reduction of barriers means the speed of exchange is much faster (USAID, 2005). This document explains that globalisation provides opportunities and challenges; in which bigger markets can now mean bigger profits which leads to greater wealth for investing in development and reducing poverty in many countries. Weak domestic policies, institutions and infrastructure and trade barriers can restrict a country's ability to take advantage of the changes. Each country makes decisions and policies that position them to maximise the benefits and minimise the challenges presented by globalisation.

The World Bank in (2004) itemised some basic facts to note about globalisation. They are as follows, that:

*Global income is more than \$31 trillion a year, but 1.2 billion people of the world's population earn less than \$1 a day.

*80% of the global population earn only 20% of the global income, and within many countries there is a large gap between rich and poor.

* The 3 billion people living in the 24 developing countries that increased their integration into the world economy enjoyed an average 5% growth rate in income per capita, longer life expectancy and better schooling.

*Two billion people living in countries in Sub-Sahara Africa, Middle East and former Soviet Union have been unable to increase their integration into the world economy, and their economies have contracted poverty has risen, and education levels have risen less rapidly than in the more globalised countries.

*Sea level rise, warming temperatures, uncertain effects on forest and agricultural system, and increased variability and volatility in weather patterns are expected to have a significant and disproportionate impact in the developing world, where the world's poor remain most susceptible to the potential damages and uncertainties inherent in a changing climate.

*The digital and information revolution has changed the way the world learns, communicates, does business and treats illnesses. In 2002, there were 364 people per 1000 using the internet in high income countries, while there were only 10 per 1000 in low income countries (World Bank and USAID, 2004).

Considering the above facts and findings about globalisation, it is worthy of note that the issues and perceived effects of globalisation excite strong feelings, tempting people to regard it in terms of black and white, when in fact globalisation is an extreme complex web of many things (USAID,2005). In this document, the benefits of globalisation were listed .These contain the following: that

- economies of countries that engaged well with the international economy have consistently grown much faster than those countries that try to protect themselves.
- countries which have had faster economic growth have then been able to improve living standards and reduce poverty.
- globalisation has led to improved access to health care and clean water which has increased the life expectancy.
- increased global income reduce investment barrier have led to increase in foreign direct investment which has accelerated growth in many countries.
- improved environmental awareness and accountability has contributed to positive environmental outcomes by encouraging the use of more efficient , less-polluting technologies and facilitating economies imports of renewable substitutes for use in place of scarce domestic natural resources
- global institution like WTO and World Bank have enable international political and economic tensions to be resolved.
- improved technology has dramatically reduced costs and prices changing the way the world communicates ,learns, does business and treat illnesses.
- modern communication s and the global spread of information have contributed to the topping of undemocratic regimes and a growth liberal democracies around the world.
- the voluntary adoption by global companies of workplace standards for their internationalised production facilities in developing countries has made an important contribution to respect for international labour standards and that,
- international migration has led to greater recognition of diversity and respect for cultural identities which is improving democracy and access to human right.

However, there is nothing good that does not have side effects or shortcomings. There are also problems associated with globalisation. These include the following among others, that:

- there are social and economic costs to globalisation.
- standard of living is dropping.

-increased trade and travel have facilitated the spread of human animal and plant diseases like HIV/AIDS, SARS and bird flu, across borders. It has also enabled the introduction of cigarettes and tobacco to developing countries, with major adverse health and financial costs associated with it.

-the increasing interdependence of countries in a globalised world makes them more vulnerable to economic problems like the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990's.

-the environment has been harmed as agricultural, forest mining and fishing industries exploit inadequate environmental codes and corrupt behaviour in developing countries.

-the major economic powers having major influence in the institution of globalisation like WTO and World Bank , can work against the interest of the developing world.

-trade liberalisation and technological improvements, change the economy of a country, destroying traditional agricultural communities and allowing cheap import of manufactured goods.

-modern communication have spread an awareness of the differences between countries, and increased the demand for migration to richer countries.

-globalised competition creates severe skill labour shortages in developing countries like the issues of brain drain of skilled workers, and

-indigenous and national cultural and languages can be eroded by the modern globalised culture (UNAID, 2004; World Bank, 2004; and UNDP. 2004).

The question that arises at this juncture is what are the global events or issues which university of Botswana in-service teachers should have a good knowledge of? This question seem pertinent, to answer it therefore, the following global events/issues are considered.

Right to Education

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights state “everyone has the right to education”. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory .Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. The right to at least a primary education is seen as so important that the United Nations gave it the second highest priority in the millennium development goals, after the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. The importance of education is that, it creates opportunities and choices for individuals, offering chances to improve standard of living while creating citizens who are skilful, well-informed and equipped to help their country achieve economic and social prosperity.

Education for All: The 1990 conference on Education for All, in Jomtien, Thailand, pledged to achieve universal primary education by 2000. But in 2000, 104 million school-age children were still not in schools, 57 percent of them were girls and 94 percent were in developing countries mostly in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The Millennium Development Goals set a more realistic, but still difficult, deadline of 2015 when all children, everywhere, should be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The steps to achieving this according to (World Bank, 2005) were outline in the in the following framework for Actions following six goals:

- (i) Expand early childhood care and education ;
- (ii) Provide free and compulsory education of good quality by 2015;
- (iii) Promote the acquisition of life-skills by adolescents and youths;

- (iv) Increase adult literacy rates by 50% by 2015;
- (v) Eliminate gender disparities in education by 2005 and achieve gender equality by 2015 and;
- (vi) Enhance educational quality.

The Global Agenda : The global agenda on right to education is to be done through(i) Global campaign for Education .This will be done by the GCE a non governmental organisations (NGOS) and teachers Unions from 150 countries. They are to promote education as basic human right, and through mobilising public opinion, pressures governments and the international community to fulfil their promises to provide free, compulsory ,and public basic education for all people, particularly for children, women, and other disadvantage sections of the society.

UNESCO Education- UNESCO is the United Nations specialised agency for education. The Education information service provides information about international Meetings, educational reports, teacher's forums, UNESCO programmes, technical advice, standard setting, innovative projects, capacity building and networking. They close links with education ministries and other partners in 190 countries put it in a key position to press for action. Its mission is to promote education as a fundamental right, improve the quality of education and stimulate experimentation, innovation and policy dialogue.

World Bank Education: Education is one of the five corporate priorities in the world banks overall assistance strategy to help countries reduce poverty.

Overarching goals in education are to help countries:

- (i) Attain education for all, and especially ensure that by 2015 every boy and girls complete a primary education of good quality, and
- (ii) Compete successfully in the global knowledge – driven markets. In setting out to achieve Education for All, the World Bank provides loans to help countries develop holistic education systems and, through education for the knowledge economy, build dynamic knowledge societies that are the key to competing in global markets. Through a mix of finance and knowledge transfers the bank aims to help countries develop education systems that are holistic, sustainable and emphasised education quality and learning outcomes.

Gender Equality

This refers to the equal valuing of the roles of women and men (UNAID, doc.517, 2005) .It works to overcome the barriers of stereotype and prejudices so that sexes are able to equally contribute to and benefit from economic social, cultural and political developments within society .It was explained in the document that when women and men have relative equality, economies grow faster and there is less corruption. When women are healthy and educated, their families, communities and nations benefits. Gender equality rests on, but is not the same as achieving gender parity, or females being represented in equal numbers as males in education, although the later offers a first stage measure of progress towards gender equality in education (Subramanian, 2005). This author explains that Gender parity reflects ‘formal’ equality in terms access to, and participation in, education. Formal equality can also be understood as equality that is premise on the women, where the male actor is held to be the norm.

Inequality that has been identified over the years includes gender inequality social inequality, economic inequality, political and legal inequality. When addressing these various inequalities, (UNAID, 2005 indoc.517) stated that the equality of men and women has been accepted as a fundamental principle of human right since the adoption of the United Nations Charter in 1945. To them, many international agreements, such as Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against women (1979), the World Conference on Human Rights in (1993) and the Millennium Development Goals (2000) have highlighted the need for countries to take action against discrimination practices.

It should be noted that the increased focus on women since the International Year for Women (1975) has led to many improvements in the lives of women. There are a number of approaches to addressing inequality. The Women in Development (WID) approach focuses on women. This helps to raise the knowledge and skills of women to overcome social, economic and political disadvantages but it may increase the workload of women and fail to recognise the role of men as an essential element of change. The Gender and Development (GAD) approach integrates gender planning in all aspects of development programmes. It works to understand the impact of proposed changes on both men and women but it may not always address the specific needs of women and men.

UNAID (2005) concludes that this passage by putting forward that achieving gender equality requires men and women to work together in search of solutions, in ways that encourage mutual respect and trust.

Peace Building

According to (UNAID, 2005 doc, 554) peace is defined in the negative as freedom from war. Peace, development and democracy form an interactive triangle. They are mutually reinforcing. Without democracy, fair distribution of economic progress is unlikely, without sustainable development the disparities become marked and can be a cause for unrest and without peace, developmental gains are quickly destroyed. The United Nations recognises four major stages of conflict resolution and supporting peace: these are conflict prevention, peace making; peace keeping; and peace building. Some of the activities and issues to consider in peace building include: Humanitarian relief and development: - This involves delivering aid (food, water, health care and reconstruction of infrastructure) to communities that have suffered conflict. Disarmament and reintegration of combatants: - into peaceful and productive members of society, removing weapons, returning ex-combatants to their homes and supporting return to civilian life. Refugees and displaced people: - This is the mechanism needed for fairly resettling people and helping them to a safe and productive life.

Economic development: - This is assisting to become self-supporting after so much has been destroyed, rebuilding infrastructure supports, making access to markets and contact with other communities easier. *Women:* - Armed conflict affects women and men differently. Women bear the brunt of sexual assault as a tool of war, experience changes in their role as breadwinner and head of family on their own and suffer the loss of partners and sons. *Children:* - Children's lives may have been disrupted severely

during the conflict. They may have been forced to flee their homes, gone without food, education and health care even witness extreme violence or been recruited or conscripted to be active combatants. Rebuilding their lives entails assisting with social rehabilitation, trauma counselling and peace education.

Reconciliation: - Reconciliation activities have included public confession, granting amnesty, community involvement to discuss appropriate punishment or acts of reconciliation, community building activities and peace education.

HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS pandemic represents one of the greatest challenges facing developing countries. HIV/AIDS threatens to reverse decades of hard-won development gap, attacks people in their most productive years, destroys families and communities, placing heavy financial burdens on the economy (USAID, 2005, doc.166). The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection causes a gradual depletion weakening of the immune system. This results in increased susceptibility of the infections, such as pneumonia and tuberculosis, and can lead to the development of HIV. Most people infected with HIV do not know that they have become infected, because symptoms develop immediately after the initial infection but they are highly infectious and can transmit the virus to another person. Acquire Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the term applied to the most affected stage of HIV infection. The majority of people infected with HIV, if not treated bring signs of AIDS within 8-10 years.

Globally, the people most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS include the poor; women and girls; people with multiple sex partners; injecting drug users; and children of infected mothers (USAID, 2005). HIV is spread through sexual intercourse; blood transfusion; the sharing of contagious needles in health care settings and through intravenous drug use; and from mother to infant, during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding. Conflict and displacement can lead to increased spread of HIV/AIDS as social networks are disrupted and sexual exploitation is used as a weapon. The AIDS epidemics are affecting women and girls in increasing numbers. Females are biologically more vulnerable to HIV than males. For physiological reasons, women are twice as likely as men to acquire HIV from a single act of unprotected vaginal sex. There are of course impacts of this pandemic:

Human and social impact: - People's lives are affected in many ways which include: a wide variety of physical health problems; social isolation due to the stigma and misunderstanding of the spread of the disease; altered family responsibilities; grandparents caring for large numbers of grandchildren; children orphaned, and left to live alone and fend for themselves etc.

Economic Impact: - Families suffer major economic problems as productive adults become ill including loss of income as family members become sick and are unable to work, give up work to care for the sick; limited income being consumed by expensive drugs and funerals. Countries suffer significant economic impact including: loss of investment in education and the knowledge skills of professional trained people; reduced ability to produce food; reduced ability to generate income from internal sales and exports; and high costs of treatment and demands on health systems.

There are facts which must be noted about HIV/AIDS. This were highlighted by (UNAIDS, 2004).

- World AIDS Day, December 1. it celebrates the progress made in the battle against the pandemic, and focuses attention on the continuing challenges caused by the spread of HIV.
- There were 39.4 million, including 17.6 million women and 2.2 million children less than 15 years of age, living with HIV in 2004.
- Sub-Saharan African has the world's highest rate of HIV/AIDS. Two third (64%) of all people living with HIV, and more than three quarters(76%) of all women living with HIV, live in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- There were 4.9 million people, including 640,000 children less than 15 years of age infected with HIV in 2004. That's 13,400 new infections every day.
- There were 3.1 million AIDS related deaths which included 510,000 children less than 15 years, in 2004.
- Of the 17 countries which each have over 100,000 children orphaned by AIDS, 13 are in conflict or on the brink of emergency and 13 are classes as heavily indebted poor countries.

In Botswana, a country with a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, life expectancy has plummeted from 60 years in 1985-1990 to just 40 years in 2000-2005. With all the above discussed significant global issues and others; the question is, do Botswana teachers have the requisite knowledge of these global issues? And if not what implication does their lack of knowledge of the issues / events have on teacher preparation programmes? This exactly is the focus of this study. To achieve the stated objective of the study therefore, the following research questions were raised:

1. What is the general pattern of knowledge of the in-service teachers of the global issues?
2. Will there be a difference in the knowledge of in-service teachers based on gender?
3. Will the level of study of the in-service teachers influence their knowledge of the significant global issues?
4. Will the course of study of the in-service teachers influence their knowledge of the global issues?

The Study

This is purely a descriptive survey study. The study measured the knowledge of global issues of some in-service primary school teachers undergoing a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree in Primary Education, in the University of Botswana. Five hundred in-service teachers were selected from the four levels of the B.Ed using the proportional to size sampling technique, since we do not have equal number of students at each level. The sample consisted of male and female in-service teachers with varying degree of teaching experiences. However, all the teachers sampled are already teaching in primary schools in Botswana. Precisely, the Department of Primary of Education, University of Botswana(UB) only admit primary school teachers who are currently on the job. One instrument was used for data collection and it was tagged "Knowledge of Significant Global Events/Issues Test". This is a fifty- item test designed by the researchers on various global issues:

international politics, economics, environmental issues, HIV/AIDS, Gender issues, culture, sports etc. The test was validated and a reliability coefficient of 0.92 was obtained using a test-re-test procedure.

The test was administered to the selected sample at the same time under a normal examination condition. Sixty minutes (1hour) was given to the testee to complete the test. However, the participants were assured that the test does not count towards their grades in any of their registered courses, rather, that the results obtained was to help the Department in enhancing the teacher- preparation programme. Data collected was analysed purely using descriptive statistics of frequency, percentages, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Results

The results of the analyses are presented as follows:

1. What is the general pattern of knowledge of the in-service teachers of the global issues?

Table 1: General Pattern of Knowledge of the In-Service Teachers of the Global Issues.

G/R	Percentage of the General Knowledge on Global issues			
		Frequency	%	Cum.%
1	10-20%	91	18.2	18.2
2	30-40%	321	64.2	82.4
3	50-60%	50	10.0	92.4
4	70-80%	20	4.0	96.4
5	90-100%	18	3.6	100.0
	Total	500	100	100

Table 1 above reveals that a majority of the in-service teachers that took part in this study have poor knowledge of the global issues examined. The table shows that more than three quarters of the participants knowledge of global issues scores fall below 50% i.e. 412 (82.4%) of the total participants. While 88 (17.6%) obtained 50% and above knowledge scores.

2. Will there be a difference in the knowledge of in-service teachers based on gender?

Table 2: Gender Difference in Knowledge of Global Issues

Variables	No	X	SD	df	t.obs.	t.crit.	P	Remark
Male	188	38.9	15.8	498	1.07	1.96	0.05	N.S
Female	312	37.4	14.7					

Not Significant < .05

The results in table 2 show that there is no gender difference in the knowledge of global issues of the in-service teachers. The mean scores of the two groups were very close, and the little difference observed was not found to be statistically significant.

3. Will the level of study of the in-service teachers influence their knowledge of the significant global issues?

Table 3a: Influence of Level of Study on In-Service Teachers' Knowledge of Global Issues.

Source	Sums of Square	df	Mean Square	F-ratio	P
Between Group	12766.4	4	3191.6	158.33	0.05
Within Group	9978.0	495	20.158		
Total	44744.4	499			

Results shown in this table indicates that level of study of the in-service teachers significantly influence their knowledge of global issues. (Note that their level ranged between 100-400.)

Table 3b: Teachers' Performance Based on Study Level.

Levels	No of Students	Mean	Standard Dev.
100 Level	125	15.6	3.5
200Level	125	22.61	3.9
300Level	125	28.78	4.2
400Level	125	32.65	6.7

Results in Table 3b above reveals that the higher the level of study of the sample, the better their knowledge of the global issues examined.

4. Will the course of study of the in-service teachers influence their knowledge of the global issues?

Table 4a: Influence of Course of Study on In-Service Teachers' Knowledge of Global Issues.

Source	Sums of Square	df	Mean Square	F-ratio	P
Between Group	10200.22	3	3400.07	192.75	0.05
Within Group	10001.47	496	17.64		
Total	20201.67	499			

Results in this table shows that course of study of in-service teachers significantly influence their knowledge of the global events.

Table 4b: Performance of In-Service Teachers Based on Level of Study.

Course of Study	Number of Student	Mean	Standard Dev.
Arts/Humanities	242	50.60	12.5
Sciences	85	18.00	3.8
Social Sciences	157	31.40	6.8

Findings as shown in table 4b above reveals differences in the knowledge scores of the teachers based on their area of specialization. The table shows the in-service teachers in Arts/Humanities have a better knowledge than the other groups with ($X = 50.60$; SD

=12.5); this is followed by in-service teachers in Social Sciences with ($X = 31.40$: $SD = 6.8$) and those in-service teachers in Sciences with ($X = 18.00$: $SD = 3.8$).

Discussion

What is evident from this study is that this category of teachers, a majority of whom have been teaching in primary schools for many years, lacked the requisite knowledge of the global issues examined. Many reasons could be advanced for this poor knowledge among the teachers; lack of access to modern communication channels, poor reading habit, complacency on the part of the teachers and general apathy. Access to modern communication channels such as Internet, cable networks, etc are still limited in the developing countries, hence, only a few of these teachers could afford to acquire these communication means. Where these facilities are available at all, access is not only limited but also very expensive, putting it out of reach of the teachers.

Another prominent factor that could be advanced for this poor knowledge as demonstrated by the in-service teachers is poor reading habit. A majority of these teachers read materials on their subjects alone, anything outside that, is considered irrelevant. Hence, significant events and issues not connected directly with their subject of teaching is jettisoned. Reading of dailies, periodicals, magazines and journals are considered largely a luxury for teachers in this environment. Therefore opportunity of updating their knowledge on current global issues is not countenanced. This is compounded by the general apathy among the teachers on political, economic and global issues in their immediate and global environment. These teachers do not generally take interest in anything outside their school.

Another significant finding in this study is that the in-service teachers' course of study and the level of their study significantly influenced their knowledge of the global issues examined. It was interesting to note that teachers with specialization in humanities/ Arts obtained the highest mean scores. Ordinarily, since most of the issues examined are political, economic and social / environmental in nature, one would expect the teachers with social sciences bias to excel above others; however, this was not the case in this study. With the level of study also coming as a strong factor, it seems the higher the teachers go, the more exposure they garner about global issues. It was, however, not strange to find science-based in-service teachers coming at the bottom of the ladder. Perhaps, because of the nature of their discipline and the workload, this category of in-service teachers focus less on issues outside their discipline.

The Way Forward.

In concluding this paper, there is the need for us to suggest some ways to move forward. First, globalisation is a reality, it has come to stay. Therefore, if our teachers are expected to function effectively in this millennium, it is compulsory that they get necessary global exposures. Since we prepare our learners for a global community, African countries and infact, the developing world generally cannot afford to remain local. Our curricular for both teacher preparations and for our schools must as a matter of urgency be revised to meet current global expectations and realities. Emphasis must be placed on curricular issues that will prepare our learners for the global market, or else, products from our schools will become obsolete and non-marketable in the emerging

global market. If the teachers, who are expected to teach the learners have demonstrated poor knowledge of global issues as have been seen in the results of this study, these recommendations cannot be taken lightly. A radical and perhaps surgical approach to our curricular review must be undertaken now to meet international standards.

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