Chapter 1
Effects of Information Capitalism and Globalization on Teaching and Learning in a Developed and in a Developing Country:
A Cross-Cultural Study of Robert Morris University in the United States and University of Lagos in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Education is undergoing constant changes under the effects of globalization and information generation, processing, and transmission, which is termed "informational capitalism." The aims of this chapter are to explore how digital technologies have transformed the productive forces of capitalism and have enabled a globalized economy. The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey. The population for the study consists of students and faculty from Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania and students and lecturers from the University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria. The data collected are compared. The findings show that perceptions vary in the magnitude with which participants responded to the use of Web 2.0 for teaching and learning. Based on the responses from all participants, both students and faculty, cultural inclination has no significant impact on their use of Web 2.0 for learning. However, the majority of the participants from the University of Lagos, both students and lecturers, believe that adoption of Web 2.0 supports cultural promotion.

INTRODUCTION

Education is undergoing constant changes under the effects of globalization and information generation, processing, and transmission, which is termed, "informational capitalism." The core of society consists of three subsystems: the economic system, in which values and property that satisfy human needs are produced, the political systems, in which power is distributed in a certain way, and collective decisions are taken, and the cultural system in which skills, meaning, and competencies are acquired, produced, and enacted in ways of life (Fuchs & Horak, 2006). All these systems are affected by Information Communication Technology (ICT), and they impact the effectiveness of teaching and learning. It is in this context that the concepts of information capitalism and globalization are introduced. Changes in the production forces generally encourage changes in the relations of production, the chief among them being technology. Technology enables human practices. Their main dimensions are the material access to them (in modern society, mainly with the help of money, as technologies are sold as commodities), the capability to use them in such a way that benefits oneself and others, and embedding them within institutions (Fuchs & Horak, 2006). Transformation through technology is an important ingredient for industrial growth, and so globalization and the information age are currently giving dynamism to capitalism. Technology thus becomes not merely a lever of material change, but a sociopolitical force within capitalism.

According to Fuchs (2008), the need to find new strategies for executing corporate and political domination has resulted in a restructuring of capitalism that is characterized by the emergence of transnational, networked spaces in the economic, political, and cultural system and has been mediated by cyberspace as a tool of global coordination and communication. Hence, these cyber tools are critical in transforming learning in this digital age. Around the world, educators and learners hope that digital technologies will lead to increased knowledge, productivity, collaboration, social freedoms, and healthier lives. Students study and conduct research using computers, multimedia, and networks, whereas teachers access unlimited materials online, improve teaching methodologies, network, and conduct research efficiently.

Some scholars have described informational capitalism in different ways. For instance, Castells (2000) describes informationalism as a new technological paradigm characterized by "information generation, processing, and transmission," that have become "the fundamental sources of productivity and power." Fitzpatrick (2002) focused on computer as a guiding technology that has transformed the productive forces of capitalism and has enabled a globalized economy.

Perhaps the economic sector most affected by technology is education. According to Hooker (1997), education is in the midst of changing from an energy-based to a knowledge-based economy, which will alter the rules of international economic competition, thrusting universities into roles they have not traditionally played. Two of the greatest challenges educational institutions face are those of harnessing the power of digital technology and responding to the information revolution" (Hooker, 1997). As a result, most educational institutions, especially in the developed world, are undergoing major structural changes through transformation in digital technologies. The way an organization responds to structural change can determine its future. For educational institutions, structural change is the result of the confluence of two forces; the information revolution and the management revolution. The information revolution drives the shift from an energy-based to a knowledge-based economy, and the management revolution is driven partly by changes in the capacity to use information.

Technology is changing more rapidly than ever before, causing more confusion about the best way to use it in schools (Bailey, 1997). Glenn (1997) stated that public support for technology

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