

Globalization, Development & Childhood



R E D I S C O V E R I N G C H I L D H O O D

Booklet

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The 'development industry', created during the past four decades to respond to a global commitment for alleviating poverty and seeking global equality, is in a state of disarray. Countries are developing according to the neo-liberal paradigm and have followed the course by opening their economies based on the logic that free trade is beneficial for nations by exposing a nation's consumers to a wide variety of products at cheap prices thus increasing their standard of living. However small producers in developing countries face stiff competition and are shut out of business by those who can mass produce and hence price their products cheaply. Idolizing market values has driven an obsession of growth which is considered essential for the proper functioning of the global economy (Timimi, 2005). This has had the consequence of plunging scores of people in the abyss of poverty. More than any other segment of the world population, children are paying the heaviest price of this colossal failure & betrayal of development.

A couple of eye-opening statistics will highlight the gravity of the situation: Among the 2.2 billion children in the world, 1 billion (every second child) are poverty-stricken, 121 million are out of education and 1.4 million die each year from lack of access to safe drinking water & adequate sanitation. It has been observed that though the gross domestic product (GDP) of countries has increased, actual number of people living in poverty increased by 100 million in the 1990's (Globalization and Children, 2006). George Soros, founder and chairman of the Soros Fund Management, claims that massive development activities by nations has distorted the allocation of resources in favor of private goods rather than public goods, which has deteriorated health, safety net and



education services (Globalization and Children, 2006). This development has created wide ranging disparities in the standard of living of people. Children have been the worst hit of this development which is evident from the appalling fact that about 17% of the new born in Sub Saharan Africa do not make it by the age of 5 (Globalization and Children, 2006).

The largest multilateral and bilateral assistance agencies have responded to this failure by focusing once again on accelerating economic growth. In order to achieve this, development models suggest deregulation and liberalization for the economies of developing nations. Organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, NAFTA and the WTO prescribe participating countries to open



their borders to multinational corporations and to put these entities on an equal footing as compared to other domestic industries (Kanner, 2006). They claim that this will be propel growth in the country and if adequate growth rates can be sustained, the poor will be swept along with the tide of rising income and will 'somehow' have access to all necessities of life. This argument is reassuring, but it reflects a more hopeful myth than a pragmatic reality. The reality is that the poor, particularly the children, are caught in the cycle of flood and drought, desertification, communal violence, unrestrained population growth, wretched educational facilities and the ebbing employment and income generation opportunities. Development

has become a big business, preoccupied more with its own growth and incentives than with the people it was originally created to serve.

Another outcome of the so called 'developmental regime' has been the introduction of globalization. Today, the word "globalization" means different things to different people. Globalization is termed to be multi-faceted, with many important dimensions – economic and social, political and environmental, cultural and religious - which affect everyone in some way. Today globalization could also be seen as a process which has changed the way societies work, the way people think, and we all agree that it is creating something new and important for our children. In this process of creating a global village, the children are told that the world is being united by virtue of the fact that 'everyone will soon be able to indulge their innate human desire for a Westernized, urbanized consumer lifestyle'. (Helena Norberg-Hodge, 2006). This has had a detrimental impact on societal values as well as language where children are becoming more and more alienated from their roots. Hence the childhood which was once marked with innocence, freedom, joys and sharing is being reshaped for children to indulge in consumption, greed, self pity and dissatisfaction.

In the age of globalization and development, multinational corporations have come up with aggressive advertising campaigns to sell their product; specifically targeting young children. This has resulted in the commercialization of childhood. Modern advertising conveys the materialistic message that penetrates deep into the psyche of young children thus denigrating the existing value systems and



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downplaying the gentle, compassionate and thoughtful dimensions of childhood (Kanner, 2006).

Values propagated by multinational corporations shrinking the world to a 'global village', has also been responsible for belittling the values that have been propagated by religions. Spiritual traditions have taught that materialistic values have been antithetical to compassion, selfishness and greed that have been taught by these organizations (Kanner, 2006). Research has also shown that people who are materialistic have a greater likelihood of being depressed and anxious. Advertising by the global media also delineates a very narrow message that only through purchasing the products that have been offered by these corporations can one achieve happiness (Kanner, 2006). This has been described by Jerry Mander and his colleagues at the International Forum on Globalization as the worldwide corporate monoculture (Kanner, 2006). Corporate monoculture homogenizes differences amongst nations to such an extent that people's desires and tastes fully conform to the output of multinational corporations.

Multinational corporations employ clever advertising strategies by doing it both globally as well as locally. Globally, the advertising campaign is responsible for the creation of a corporate monoculture but marketers also adopt the strategy of 'localization' by being more culturally sensitive and encouraging diversity (Kanner, 2006). Local culture is overtaken by the corporate culture and the forces of monoculture continue to exert an influential force. In diverse 'developing' nations around the world, people are induced to meet their needs not through their community or local economy, but by trying to 'buy into' the global market. Also one



more notable affect of globalization that is cited is the enormous growth of urban slums in developing countries leaving families with limited resources which prematurely pushes children to join in the survival struggle, depriving them of the true joys of childhood. These global forces based on consumption and consumerism, are making even the familial relationships tenuous and superficial, leading children to a society where "You are What You Buy" is no longer a marketing slogan; but a rapidly becoming fact of life.

Besides wooing children through advertising and teaching them values that involve individualism and materialism, globalization has also been responsible

Zubeida Mustafa: “Globalization has had a phenomenal impact. It has fragmented society and alienated people from each other. In the times of globalization the private sector plays a stronger role than the public sector and the objective of the private sector is always profits.”



for bringing in Western ideas and attitudes of child rearing which are diametrically opposite to those which are employed traditionally (Timimi, 2005). Traditional family systems are transformed or are under strain in the wake of globalization exposing our children to degenerated “underlying core values” that has proved to be a highly effective means of destroying self-esteem, fostering new ‘needs’ and creating dissatisfactions among children. Globalization has also resulted in disrupting traditional cultures. As a consequence traditional knowledge, which has been passed on from generations to generations by local and tribal communities in the developing world, is getting lost. The end result is that young children are being made to feel that their own language, their own skin color, their own way of being is inferior.

Developing countries also indigenously pose a family setting which is joined rather than the contemporary nuclear structure. Globalization has been responsible for undermining this traditional family setting which has been subsumed by the task of earning money to sustain a decent lifestyle. Those who are unable to attain that standard, their children are victims of inferiority complex, depression and under confidence. Research has shown that even in developing countries the onset of autism, attention deficit hyper activity disorder (ADHD) and the use of psychotropic diseases amongst children is on the rise (Timimi, 2005).

A homogeneous, consumer culture is denying our children the right to recognize their true self. The resulting monoculture imposes uniformity and Westernization which leads to aversion from their own cultural references, local traditions and indigenous value systems.



Discourse on Globalization, Development & Childhood

Speakers argued that the corporate form of development has had an adverse impact on childhood. The model of development employed for the developing nations did not conform to the indigenous socio-cultural milieu and is a 'distant' developmental model. Development has had unjust consequences as wealth is extracted by a wealthy few and the masses plunge into the abyss of poverty which leaves a deep psychological, social and emotional impact on the children. Psychologically, this has had an adverse impact on children as they have become victims of an inferiority complex and cannot relate to their indigenous language, clothing and skin color.

Speakers also contended that globalization has had a detrimental effect on the existing family bonds and values that have been taught to children. Children are just obsessed with being part of the global monoculture which has caused them to be alienated from the traditional family networks. Thus children lose their childhood and become part of the consumer culture extant in the society. This commercialization has pushed away people's identity and way of life. Globalization has also been forced upon people by the media and has resulted in changing the pattern of consumption. Disseminating the results of a survey that one of the panelists carried out, it was evidenced that about 73% of the children believed that soft drinks were good for health. It was also seen that there was a complete shift in the attitudes of the population as traditional food which are more healthy and nutritious was replaced by junk food.

The panelists also claimed that one of the significant impacts of globalization is that it has undermined

traditional family settings. It has also been responsible for fragmenting societies and has instilled a sense of alienation. Speaking from the perspective of nature, it was recognized by the panelists that schools have not played their part in cultivating moderate citizens but instead children have grown to be rampant



consumers and if we perpetuate on the habits imposed by globalization, we will strip the earth of all the resources. The speakers also realized a need to be careful of not exploiting the finite resources in our world.





The speakers also contended that it was the 'profit motive' which was driving this consumerism bandwagon. The private sector operates on the profit motive and is concerned with mass production and burgeoning profit rates. This has had an adverse impact on education where children are being educated but there is hardly any real learning process taking place. Schools have focused more on producing students who later on can be employed by the 'profit run' private sector paying little attention on cultivating their aesthetic and creative self. Children are seen more as a developing consumer rather than as a healthy, developing individual. Media has also colluded and is acting as a significant player in propagating this consumer culture.

The speakers also argued that globalization has been responsible for pushing out traditional learning systems and has caused a mental downgrading of the indigenous language and culture. Panelists argued that English is the global language today and its rampant usage has curbed the growth of other languages.

There have been language hierarchies which have been created in the mental framework of children in which children look down upon their indigenous language and attach significance to the learning of English. This was claimed to be the predicament of colonized nations that they only used the language of the colonizers. Speakers suggested that the speaking of any language cannot be value free since individuals bring their own biases and prejudices; however it was best to keep the native language and that of the colonizer at par with each other so as not to transmit the biases to the coming generations.

The panelists proposed that there was a need to redefine development. Developing nations need sustainable development so that they are propelled on the trajectory of growth without undermining the underlying values that are embedded in the society. Development strategies should nurture traditional values. Speakers also accentuated that a development model should have two primal components: human wellbeing and sustainability. For human wellbeing it is necessary that the development strategy should recognize the potential for of every individual so as to uphold their self respect. Development strategies should also support diversity and the freedom to proudly retain people's own identity, language and racial characteristics.

It was emphasized that developmental paradigms need to be held accountable. The speakers also emphasized that a balanced development strategy was needed in which there was mutual participation from both the state and the individuals. The speakers emphasized that there was a need to critically reflect on the development models proposed so that we can decipher which model is appropriate for our society instead of blindly following development models imposed by the West.



Development, Globalization & Childhood

- Introducing concepts such as branding and consumerism in children.
- Spreading a materialistic lifestyle and attitude that sees consumption as the path to prosperity.
- Causing local cultures to inevitably fall victim to the global "consumer" monoculture.
- Causing local languages to be lost at the expense of mass awareness campaigns to promote one language.
- Consumer values which are overwhelming peoples' sense of community and social solidarity. Greater social unrest has caused a weakening of extended family ties.
- Introducing the concept of marketing amongst children. Marketing to children is a big business. Children are now the largest and fastest-growing target market for consumption.
- Corporations spend about \$15 billion each year on advertising targeting children.
- Bombarding children with marketing every waking moment. They see about 40,000 advertisements a year on TV alone. The figure is more rampant in "Third World" countries.



Source:
www.whomindsthechild.org
www.commercialfreechildhood.org
www.newdream.org



Effects on Children

- As consumers children are becoming overly conscious about "Materialistic" things; at the expense of human qualities. Development of such a human nature in children has resulted in them being less happy, having low self esteem and reported symptoms of anxiety.
- Marketing also encourages eating disorders, youth violence, family stress, and contributes to children's diminished capability to play creatively.
- Television advertising affects children's food knowledge, choices, and consumption of particular food products. A preschooler's risk for obesity increases by 6% for every hour of TV watched per day. If there's a TV in the child's bedroom, the odds jump an additional 31% for every hour watched.
- With the rampant onslaught of advertising at six months of age, when babies imitate simple sounds like "ma-ma", "ba-ba," they are instead forming mental images of corporate logos and mascots.
- At three years of age, before they can read, one out of five children is already making specific requests for brand-name products.
- These days majority of parents believe that their children define self worth in terms of what they own.

Tips for Parenting to Fight Consumer Culture:

- Get rid of the TV or if this cannot be achieved at least do not make TV focus of your children's lives.
- Expose kids to other media - surrealist films, conceptual art exhibits (carefully selected), gatherings of interesting adult friends with folk lore, imaginative and creative stories to tell. This will not only preserve your oral culture but will also contribute towards the cognitive, social and emotional development of children.
- Remove the logos from clothes, theirs and yours. Talk with kids about why you're doing this.
- Parents who resist consumerism for themselves are the ones who teach their children to resist it.
- Teach children to be doers and creators rather than shoppers and buyers.
- Supply them with sidewalk chalk, old cardboard boxes and other makings of creative play.
- Grow your own food. Involve the kids. Teach your child of the connections within the natural world. Experience their beauty together. Talk about where things come from, who made them, what they are made of.
- Teach by example and conviction, a set of values that allows kid to make their own choices.
- Teach kids empathy for others. Instead of buying toys, suggest they spend the money bringing some groceries to someone who needs them and other socially responsible actions.

Live Simply... So That Others Can Simply Live...

Number of children in the world: 2.2 billion

Number in poverty: 1 billion (every second child)

Shelter, safe water and health

For the 1.9 billion children from the developing world, there are:

- 640 million without adequate shelter (1 in 3)
- 400 million with no access to safe water (1 in 5)
- 270 million with no access to health services (1 in 7)

Children out of education worldwide: 121 million

Survival for children

Worldwide:

- 10.6 million died in 2003 before they reached the age of 5 (same as children population in France, Germany, Greece and Italy)
- 1.4 million die each year from lack of access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation

Health of children

Worldwide:

- 2.2 million die each year because they are not immunized
- 15 million orphaned due to HIV/AIDS (similar to the total children population in Germany or United Kingdom)

This situation stands at a standstill when:

- Only 12% of the world's military spending would provide health care for all (including immunization for all children), eliminate severe malnutrition and halve moderate malnutrition, and provide safe drinking water for all.
- Only 4% of the wealth that the world's 225 richest people would need to give up to wipe out world poverty.



Question & Answer Session

Q: What effect does globalization have on children and their childhood?

A: Globalization has had a phenomenal impact on children. Firstly, it has fragmented the societies and caused the bond between the child and the community to erode. It has caused the child to be alienated from his family which traditionally has been very strong. The onset of multinational corporations has also played a role towards this deterioration. These organizations work for achieving profit which has had a detrimental impact on not only the societal values but also the social institutions such as that of education which has become more of a business rather than being something that people have held sacred for centuries. Secondly, globalization has also made children oblivious of the national language and heritage as they are part of the global monoculture.

Q: Can language be value free?

A: No. Every society has their own biases reflected in the language they speak. However there is a possibility to work towards making the language value free. Here, teachers have an enormous responsibility. Not only do they have to try to vanquish prejudices but they have to also try to become role models themselves in promoting indigenous languages. Teachers also have to work against the

creation of any language hierarchies in children. The local language and the universal language, English should be kept at par with each other.

Q: Is urbanization and development negative?

A: Speaking in a theoretical framework they are not negative. However, in actual fact they are destructive. Urbanization and development has been seen to have severe psychological, environmental and social repercussions. It tears down natural systems and robs people of their self esteem. This process of development is monocultural and inherently Eurocentric; everywhere the same model of development is replicated. In fact, colonialism was part and parcel of a process which was later called development. That is how countries in the Third World have acquired it. It is evident today that small towns where most of us have grown up were places which had clean air and were environmentally friendly. Now these towns host concrete structures and are polluted due to the increased traffic. There has been massive deforestation and these places have been encroached



upon and houses are built on them. This has been one of the root causes for the destruction of biodiversity. Urbanization has been detrimental to the sustenance of biological systems in the planet. It is not a question of preference but of survival.

Q: Communities have been home to a thriving culture and rich traditions inclusive of frugality, cooperation and an intimate and location specific knowledge of the environment. Since the inception of economic development in the community, everything has been completely changed. Why is that so?

A: The problem exists in the common perception of development as conceived in the West and that hints on development being understood as progress. It has been seen that the introduction of development has torn people from their ecosystem and their own resources. People imbibe an alien living style and dwell in an urban environment which is far removed from the traditional culture and values. This model of development is rooted in the West and is profoundly Eurocentric which shatters the communal form of indigenous living practices. There should be a consolidated effort from all ends to support indigenous knowledge and living systems from the ills of the westernized developmental model.



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Rediscovering Childhood

Also included in this series

- Gain an understanding on what childhood is ideally meant to be and learn about the challenges of childhood in today's world.
- Explore the role of traditional and modern social institutions i.e. family, community and schools on children's intellectual and social development in today's consumer society.
- Learn about how media and technology are changing children's concepts of self, community, family, nature, time, and distance; and about the grave implications of media and technology on children's health.
- Review the challenges and opportunities for Early Childhood Development in Pakistan.



Introduction to the
Symposium & Conference



Social Institutions
& Childhood



Media, Technology
& Childhood



Early Childhood
Development in Pakistan

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