

# The new age culture and its impact on our flat world

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Clear and precise language has been used and the paper highlights the assumptions clearly.

- Indira J. Parikh

## Abstract

This paper deals with the word Globalization and the impact on the socioeconomic culture and the geopolitics of a nation. I have borrowed the term flat world from Thomas Friedman (The World is Flat). He describes that there are three eras of Globalization namely. Globalization 1.0 from the year 1492 (when Columbus set sail looking for our India and landed in the North American continent) to early 1800's and set colonies. This shrunk the world from size large to medium. Globalization 2.0 is from early 1800's to 2000 shrunk the world from size medium to size small with the growth of capitalism. Finally Globalization 3.0 from 2000 to present from size small to size tiny. The Dictionary of Psychology (Atkinson et al., 1987) says culture "is the totality of customs, arts, science, religious and political behavior taken as an integrated whole that distinguish one society or group of persons whose customs, arts and tradition set them apart from others". Hence, we are to face these challenges brought in by globalization into our belief and value system. By learning or amalgamating new ideas and innovations. We have to get into lateral thinking and transit from scripture based frozen knowledge to emerge as the third best economy in the world.

## *The new age culture and its impact on our flat world*

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## Introduction

This paper deals with the word Globalization and the impact on the socioeconomic culture and the geopolitics of a nation. I have borrowed the term flat world from Thomas Friedman (The World is Flat). He describes that there are three eras of Globalization namely as follows. Globalization 1.0 from the year 1492 (when Columbus set sail looking for our India and landed in the North American continent) to early 1800's and set colonies. This shrunk the world from size large to medium. Globalization 2.0 is from early 1800's to 2000 shrunk the world from size medium to size small with the growth of capitalism. Finally Globalization 3.0 from 2000 to present from size small to size tiny.

Bringing the age of information and knowledge workers (Peter Drucker,2001) and the ten flatteners are outsourcing, offshoring, uploading, supply chaining, insourcing and informing. These have helped the growth of creative collaborations and negative ones paradoxically too, like Al-Qaeda. The Berlin wall's coming down was symbolic as it brought the windows(the operating systems) up. Our Indian economy changed its face too by opening up to the world in 1991 and thus bringing down the symbolic wall of the socialist economy we had for fifty years. But the future came too fast for us to handle this transition landing us in a future shock(Alvin Toffler, Future Shock,1969) and there onto the new age 'Revolutionary wealth'(Toffler and Toffler,2006). We became a consumer society or rather a prosumer society (one who produces as well consumes) and ampute do distort few of our cultural contexts in the race. Therefore we need to relearn, redesign the curriculum and sensitize the Indian knowledge workers to these change agents and encourage horizontal growth of skills. To help deal with the overwhelming affect of Globalization and take advantage of the fiber optics undersea cables layed by North America pre dot.com bust and use it as a blessing. Information and knowledge is no more a elitist issue, wikipedia (informing via the net, any new concept contrary to encyclopedia which is scripture based and frozen) has changed the face of informing one and all. Even when I write this paper the wikipedia spelling is marked red by the windows xp (wondering what vista will have to say) since wikipedia arrived later and revolutionized the very idea of writing and sharing through the electronic medium.

**Glocalization** is a term that was invented in order to emphasize that the globalization of a product is more likely to succeed when the product or service is adapted specifically to each locality or culture it is marketed in. The term combines the word globalization with localization. (An earlier term for globalization in terms of product preparedness for international marketing is internationalization.)

The term first appeared in the late 1980s in articles by Japanese economists in the Harvard Business Review. According to the sociologist Roland Robertson, who is credited with popularizing the term, glocalization describes the tempering effects of local conditions on global pressures. At a 1997



conference on "Globalization and Indigenous Culture," Robertson said that glocalization "means the simultaneity --- the co-presence --- of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies."

The increasing presence of McDonalds restaurants worldwide is an example of globalization, while the restaurant chain's menu changes in an attempt to appeal to local palates are an example of glocalization. Perhaps even more illustrative of glocalization: For promotions in France, the restaurant chain recently chose to replace its familiar Ronald McDonald mascot with Asterix the Gaul, a popular French cartoon character. (wikipedia,2007)

### **CULTURE :A social sciences approach**

Culture is a broad and multifaceted concept in the social sciences. It has been conceptualized in various ways by those in various disciplines and enjoys a distinguished but contentious lineage (Kluckhohn, 1962, cited in Bond, 2002). For present purposes, culture may be regarded as a lattice-work of constraints and affordances, which shape the behavioral development of its members into similar patterns (Bond, 2002). Culture could be defined psychologically as: "A shared system of beliefs (what is true), values (what is important), expectations, especially about scripted behavioral sequences, and behavior meanings (what is implied by engaging in a given action) developed by a group over time to provide the requirements of living (food and water, protection against the elements, security, belonging, social appreciation, and the exercise of one's skills) in a particular geographical niche. This shared system enhances communication of meaning and coordination of actions among a culture's members by reducing uncertainty and anxiety through making its member's behavior predictable, understandable, and valuable" (Bond, 2002).

Nida (1954,cited in Iralu ,2000 ) in the book Customs and culture says that the anthropologist's definition of culture is all learned behavior which is socially acquired that is, the material and non-material traits, which are passed on from one generation to another.

The Dictionary of Psychology (Atkinson et al., 1987) says culture "is the totality of customs, arts, science, religious and political behavior taken as an integrated whole that distinguish one society or group of persons whose customs, arts and tradition set them apart from others".

For most tribal societies, culture is synonymous with religion. Culture, the elusive term, is an aspect of life with many definitions to it but for our purpose one can express it as the manifestations of the religious beliefs in practice. Cultural practices are highly religious in nature. Concern for the survival of the tribe forms the primary basis of

these cultures. It is culture that prescribes the code of conduct for the tribe to live by and it is a code guided by moral principles that touch every sphere of life-social, economic and political because the influence of religion is all-permeating. Harmonious living, being the aim of all cultures, social laws operate to remove obstacles to the harmonious life of the society .

Culture includes knowledge belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society. Culture consists of abstract pattern of and for living and dying. Such abstract patterns are cultural to the extent that they are learned directly or indirectly in social interaction and to the extent that they are part of the common orientation of two more people. In common sense the culture is understood to mean beautiful, refined or interesting but this interpretation does not constitute its scientific definition. Culture includes all that man has acquired in the mental and intellectual sphere of her/his individual and social life. Culture is a part of human beings, in a sense, but if we were to take seriously the idea that anything molded by man or anything 'embodying' culture is itself part of culture, then we should have to regard human being as part of culture. Although culture is abstract and intangible its influence is far from superficial. Anthropologists define a common trait in a culture as a theme (Wallace, 1970).

Many social scientists make a distinction between-

- 1) Material culture
- 2) Non -material culture

Material culture in their sense comprises tangible things that have been shaped to some extent by man, such things often called as artifacts or culture objects like houses, furnishing, tools and works of art. Some sociologist distinguishes between explicit and implicit culture. The following are essential characteristics of culture:

- 1) Culture is inclusive of those elements, which human beings have created and which can be improved.
- 2) The introduction of novel element increases the complexity and quality of culture.
- 3) It is communicated from one generation to another in a psychic form.
- 4) Culture is found only in human society.

Culture is an acquired quality and not innate. Traits learned through socialization, habits and thoughts are what are called culture. In this way, culture is communicated from one generation to the next. Every individual takes some part in the transmission and communication of culture. It is inclusive of the expectation of the members of groups. Humans



cannot create culture while existing apart from the group. It includes those ideal patterns and norms of behavior according to which the members of society attempt to conduct themselves. Culture is constantly undergoing change in concurrence to the environmental, and due to this transformation, it is constantly being adapted to external forces but once it is developed, the influence of the natural environment begins to decrease. In this way culture is social, idealistic and acquired, which fulfills many of man's need.

### **Cross-Cultural Approaches**

The western social sciences teaching, research and approach have been accused of being both culture-bound and culture-blind. The accusation of culture-boundness stems from an overall omission of research that has been done outside of U.S and other English-speaking countries (Berry et al., 2002, cited in Lonner, 2002).

#### *The absolutist orientation*

The goal is called the transport and test goal by Berry and Dasen (1974). In essence psychologists seek to transport their present hypotheses and findings to other cultural settings in order to test their applicability with other races universally. It assumes that there is an underlying commonality to all human thought and activity, and that culture is a very thin veneer covering the essence and core of invariant human nature. In "mainstream" psychology the assumption is that almost everything one reads in psychology text is true across cultures. Absolutists prefer not to be bothered by culture which they believe is unimportant and irrelevant in their quest for basic principles of human nature (Lonner, 1990).

#### *The relativist orientation*

Berry and Dasen (1974) again proposed a second approach based on the ideas forwarded by Boas (1938) and Herkovits (1948) by avoiding ethnocentric ways, that may lead to understand people in their own cultural contexts and values and tried to explain culture in the emic way. The relativist position asserts that it is futile to search for absolute or fixed truths in human thought and behavior. A relativist maintains that it is more appropriate to focus on human thought and activity as they occur in specific socio-cultural contexts. Eschewing cultural comparisons or contrasts, researchers who take this position believe in "social constructionism" which is the view that all cultures, and even all individuals within all cultures, seek and construct their own meanings.

#### *The universalist position*

This third approach was generated for wide range of cultures by Berry and Dasen (1974). This

approach is a synthesis of the first two approaches which says that though basic psychological processes are likely to be common features of human life, their concepts contain plethora of culturally distinct manifestations. At present social scientists have come to undertake cross-cultural studies, but the concept of culture remains inexact and unresolved. It assumes that there is a dynamic interaction between human beings and their environment, and that it should, in theory, be possible to establish broad commonalities in human nature that reflect a deeper reality than the scientists' own conceptual categories. The advocates of this approach agree with the relativists' importance of culture (Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1994).

(Cited in Konwar, 2004)

### **Global, National and Organizational Cultures**

#### *Organizational Culture vs. National Culture*

National cultures must be taken into account if accurate predictions are to be made about organizational behavior in different countries.

Does national culture override an organization's culture? The research indicates that national culture has a greater impact on employees than does their organization's culture.

This has to be qualified to reflect the self-selection that goes on at the hiring stage. The employee selection process will be used by multinationals to find and hire job applicants who are a good fit to their organization's dominant culture.

#### *Culture as a liability*

We are treating culture in a nonjudgmental manner.

Culture enhances organizational commitment and increases the consistency of employee behavior, but there are potentially dysfunctional aspects of culture.

#### *Barrier to change:*

Culture is a liability when the shared values are not in agreement with those that will further the organization's effectiveness. This is most likely to occur when an organization's environment is dynamic.

This helps to explain the challenges that executives at companies like Mitsubishi,

General Motors, Eastman Kodak, Kellogg, and Boeing have had in recent years in adapting to upheavals in their environment.



### Barrier to diversity:

Hiring new employees who, because of race, gender, disability, or other differences, are not like the majority of the organization's members creates a paradox.

Management wants new employees to accept the organization's core cultural values but, at the same time, they want to support the differences that these employees bring to the workplace.

Strong cultures put considerable pressure on employees to conform. They limit the range of values and styles that are acceptable.

Organizations seek out and hire diverse individuals because of their alternative strengths, yet these diverse behaviors and strengths are likely to diminish in strong cultures.

### *Strong cultures, therefore, can be liabilities when:*

They effectively eliminate the unique strengths that diverse people bring to the organization.

They support institutional bias or become insensitive to people who are different.

### Barrier to acquisitions and mergers:

Historically, the key factors that management looked at in making acquisition/merger decisions:

- a. Financial advantages
- b. Product synergy

Cultural compatibility has become the primary concern. Whether the acquisition actually works seems to have more to do with how well the two organizations' cultures match up.

### *Institutionalization: A Forerunner of Culture*

Viewing organizations as cultures where there is a system of shared meaning among

members is a relatively recent phenomenon. Until the mid-1980s, organizations were

rational means by which to coordinate and control people.

Organizations have personalities too, just like individuals:

They can be rigid or flexible, unfriendly or supportive, innovative or conservative.

General Electric offices and people are different from the offices and people at General Mills. Harvard and MIT are in the same business education but each has a unique character.

The origin of culture as an independent variable affecting an employee's attitudes and

behavior can be traced back more than 50 years ago to the notion of institutionalization.

When an organization becomes institutionalized, it is valued for itself, not merely what it produces: It acquires immortality.

It redefines itself. (it is built last and grows from good to great-Collins2004)

Institutionalization produces common understandings about what is appropriate and, fundamentally, meaningful behavior.

Acceptable modes of behavior become largely self-evident to its members. This is essentially the same thing that organizational culture does.

(Robbins,2004).

### Conclusion

Therefore we have to prepare our new age knowledge workers as well as our society at large to this challenges and adapt to the best practice models and bench mark the process of learning (training and development). Inculcate the traditional Indian system of learning with modern applications and develop a synergy .Today India indeed has to live up to the standard of being the third best emerging economy.

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#### **PROFILE- Dr Neelanjan (neel) Konwar**

Is a 34 year old Ph.D in Psychology and has work as well as academic experiences with Government, NGO and corporate sector. He has about six publications in peer reviewed journals and book chapter. He has presented in National and International conferences in USA, Canada, Sweden, and Russia. He is presently a faculty in psychology and management in Pune and consulting to I.LO (Yashada) , RBI and the Governor of Goa his Excellency Shri S.C.Jamir. Presently working on writing a book and making a documentary on Women entrepreneurs of NE India. He belongs to Assam NE India but practices global behavior.

