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Botswana: An Example for Teaching the Concept of Interdependence

Michael Bamidele Adeyemi

Abstract

This paper attempts to describe the concept of interdependence and its rationale. This paper uses the country of Botswana to illustrate the concept to junior secondary school students. In order to do so, this paper gives a brief background to Botswana and a brief description of the concept and rationale of interdependence. Finally, this paper attempts to use Botswana to illustrate the teaching of interdependence by way of education, health services, transportation, and Botswana's membership in world organization, with reference to some related topics on interdependence from the junior secondary school social studies syllabus.

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Michael Bamidele Adeyemi

Introduction

The concept of interdependence has accrued phenomenal importance in school curriculums throughout Africa. Across various curriculums, the concept of interdependence has been used to illustrate how a country depends and is dependent on other countries. Various examples can be found in all aspects of life as a country emerges from the agrarian society through the developing stage to a developed one. In this paper, I attempt to define the concept of interdependence, give rationale for the learning of interdependence, and also to use Botswana as an example to teach this concept to students at the junior secondary level (middle school in the USA) by illustrating with relevant examples. Following their sixth birthday, children are eligible to enter Standard 1 in January in the Botswana educational setting. After a period of seven years they graduate as primary school leavers. These primary school leavers are either admitted into junior secondary schools, or the brigades for their vocational training. Junior secondary school leavers may proceed to the senior secondary and finally to the university. Various educational policies in Botswana (Republic of Botswana, 1977; 1994, 1997) have emphasized the development of citizens who are well informed and capable of effective participation in society. To this end, knowledge of interdependence and how it operates is necessary in the school curriculum

Objectives

This paper attempts to:

- Describe the concept of interdependence.
- Provide its rationale in the curriculum of junior secondary schools in Botswana.
- Use the country of Botswana as an example to teach this concept to junior secondary school students.

In doing so, a brief background to Botswana and a description of the concept and rationale of interdependence will be provided. Finally, this paper attempts to use Botswana to illustrate the teaching of interdependence by way of education, health services, transportation, and Botswana's membership in world organizations as specified in the objectives of this paper.

General Background to Botswana

Botswana is a landlocked country located in the southern part of Africa (Adeyemi, 1996, 2005). Formerly known as Bechuanaland, it is situated between latitude 18° and 26° and longitude 20° and 30° east of the Greenwich meridian (*Africa Today*, 1991:81). With a land area of 582, 200 square kilometers, the country shares boundary with Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia and Zambia. It was mainly an agrarian society before independence in 1966 but has today transformed into a strong economy. Climatically, Botswana is continental with most of the areas located in the arid or semi-arid zones.

The country achieved independence in 1966 and, according to the 2003 census, has a population of 1.7 million. Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world when it achieved independence but has today metamorphosed into a shining example of democracy, political stability and sustained economic growth thanks to a booming tourist, diamond mining

and livestock industry. Botswana is rated by the Transparency International as the 32nd least corrupt country in the world and the least corrupt country in Africa. Weeks (2002) comments that sustained development in Botswana has been facilitated by freedom from corruption as growth, fuelled by government spending, has occurred in most sectors, including education.

The Concept of Interdependence

No human being is an island unto himself or herself. Even, living and non-living things do interact. Human beings interact with their environments in many ways; for instance, humans depend on plants for survival. Plants, in turn, depend on the carbon dioxide human beings exhale, for photosynthesis. This is a typical case of symbiosis that can be used to explain the concept of interdependence to junior secondary students in Botswana. The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2005: 744) defines 'interdependence' as 'a situation in which people or things depend on each other.' Using this simple example, human beings from one country interact with other human beings from other countries in various ways. They buy and sell goods from each other. They operate in social groups and govern themselves based on certain systems. As a nation, Botswana also buys from and sells goods to other nations. It is a member of the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Non-Aligned Movement, the African, Caribbean, and Pacific group of countries, the Commonwealth of Nations, the World Bank, the United Nations, to name but a few (Republic of Botswana, 1991).

Rationale for Teaching and Learning the Concept of Interdependence

The school is expected to prepare students for citizenship in a complex world. Graduates of junior secondary schools in Botswana should be seen to possess the knowledge and skills that will enable them not only to appreciate the importance of their own country, but also other countries far and near. In a way, these skills enhance the capability of students to deal with global issues because what happens in their own country or other countries is bound to affect the global village. Taking for instance the problems associated with the *tsunami* and the hurricane disasters in South Asia and the USA respectively, the problems had to be seen and solved on a global scale, as countries are dependent on each other in all facets of life. Simply put, the world is a global village and what happens in one part of the village affects other parts. No wonder Becker (1979), otherwise known as the 'father of global education' asserts that interdependence arising from global education incorporates an understanding that 'the individual is viewed as a member of the species and a citizen of the planet as well as a citizen of a particular nation.' It follows that no matter what name we adopt as a nation, no matter what the artificial boundaries separating nations, the idea of interdependence involving interconnection of cultural, ecological, economic, political, technological, educational and other systems must be in place so that students can appreciate our similarities and differences.

An expectation of the junior secondary education in Botswana is the preparation of citizens for the complex world in which we live. This implies the capability of citizens to deal with global issues such as international development and interdependence. Becker (1979), Kniep (1987), Banks (2004) and Merryfield (2001) have advocated for an education involving knowledge of interdependence and international education which transcends national boundaries and which also links global interconnection of cultural, economic, political and technological systems. Further, Friedman (2005), Hanvey (2004) and Sylvester (2002; 2003; 2005) have highlighted that students should appreciate the elements of interdependence among nations of the world which may enhance the need for greater understanding and acceptance of diverse cultural practices.

An understanding of interdependence can help students from Botswana understand their relationship to the regional, continental and global community, and also help reduce some of the negative stereotypes they have of one another (Adeyemi; 1984, 1996; Gutek; 1993).

Teaching the Concept of Interdependence with Illustrations from Botswana

An examination of the aims of the *Junior Secondary School Social Studies Syllabus* in Botswana depicts eight aims. Of these aims, one of them fits succinctly with the objectives of this paper:

To promote an understanding of Botswana's place in Africa, in terms of regional, political, and economic grouping and its bilateral relations with other countries (Ministry of Education, 1987:1). With reference to this aim, the *Junior Secondary Social Studies Syllabus* (Ministry of Education, 1987: 13-14) tabulates two units, topics/sub topics, prescribed numbers of lessons and some comments relating to 'interdependence' as found below.

COLUMN A UNIT	COLUMN B Syllabus Ref. No.	COLUMN C Topic or Subtopic	COLUMN D Time Spent (Weeks/Periods)	COLUMN E Notes/Comments
UNIT 11	8	BOTSWANA AND WORLD ECONOMY: Foreign Exchange, International Trade, Dependence, Self Reliance, Communications and Interdependence		Main thrust of this unit to be on interdependence in terms of international trade (exports and imports).
11a		Regional trade and tourism	5-6 Lessons	Pupils to identify Botswana's major trading partners and trade commodities by value (term and trade). The positive and negative aspects of tourism.
11b		International trade and tourism	7-8 Lessons	Same as 11a

11c		Transport and communications	5-6 Lessons	Students should demonstrate an understanding of problems faced by Botswana as a landlocked country – and discuss ways by which these problems could be overcome – e.g. telecommunications.
UNIT 12	8	BOTSWANA AND WORLD POLITICS: Conflict, cooperation, oppression, ideology, interaction		The main thrust will be Botswana's role in world politics
12a		Botswana diplomatic missions	3-4 Lessons	Students should identify the missions and find out reasons for their establishment.
12b		Botswana and world organizations	7-8 Lessons	Students should study, discuss and evaluate the aims and objectives of the world organizations of which Botswana is a member – e.g. OAU, commonwealth, etc.
12c		Botswana as a Frontline state	6-7 lessons	Pupils should demonstrate the understanding of the concept of the frontline states and identify its members. The role of Botswana in promoting peace in the region.

An examination of the table indicates how much time is allocated to teaching the broad topic of interdependence, the main thrusts and the subtopics to be covered within specific periods. One lesson period is equivalent to forty minutes.

In other words, Botswana and the World Economy (Unit 11a) with some subtopics such as foreign exchange, international trade, dependence, self-reliance, communications and interdependence, regional trade and tourism should be taught within 5-6 lessons (200—240 minutes). The teaching emphasis with the active participation of the students is specified under the notes and comments in column E. The same also applies to units 11b, 11c, 12 a, b and c. The activity utilized in teaching each of the subtopics is the choice of the teacher which may be through group work, assigned readings and individual assignment but the teaching must be learner-centered as emphasized in the syllabus.

'International trade', a subtopic in unit 11 is illustrated by Botswana's trading potential with other countries and *vice versa*. Botswana is the largest producer of diamond in Africa. It earns 80% of its revenue by exporting this mineral to such countries as USA, UK and Germany. In return, Botswana imports vehicles, electrical appliances, household utensils and other materials from the international community. Beef is also an important export of Botswana. The Botswana Meat Corporation, with headquarters in Lobatse exports beef and leather to, Europe, America and many African countries. Botswana depends, to a large extent, on the import of electrical appliances, motor vehicles, building materials and other important products from South Africa. In the area of agricultural products Botswana, being located in an arid environment, depends very much on South Africa for fruits, vegetables, and even water during severe drought.

Education

Education is considered a basic human right (United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). Therefore, Botswana recognizes the right of the individual to basic education in line with the World Declaration of Education for All which must provide:

- i. Numeracy, literacy and problem solving skills.
- ii. Essential knowledge and life skills, e.g. health and nutrition education, population and environmental education, for the improvement of the quality of life.
- iii. Self-employment skills.
- iv. The basis for further education and training (World Conference of Education for All, 1990).

In addition, UNESCO (1974) recommends education geared towards international understanding, cooperation and peace, human right issues and fundamental freedom. To this end, Botswana in its *Junior Secondary School Syllabus* advocates for an education that also involves a link with the outside world. This implies a notion of interdependence.

Botswana sends its citizens for training in various fields of education to Australia, USA, UK and many African countries. There are many international students from South Africa, USA, UK, Malaysia, India, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Sudan, studying in Botswana. At the tertiary level of education, the vision of the University of Botswana (the only university at present) is to be a leading centre of academic excellence in Africa and the world. The value statement of the university advocates internationalism through participation in the global world of scholarship, by being receptive and responsive to issues within the international environment as well as the recruitment of international staff and student body. The *University of Botswana Policy on Internalization (Version 1)* (2006:3) recognizes that the University of Botswana is fast becoming a most attractive destination for students and scholars in many countries seeking to study and undertake research in Africa because it is advantageously located in a country which has a strong international reputation for its rapidly developing economy and stable political system. The university also has excellent staff and resources.

As students and academic staff from Botswana engage in undergraduate and graduate studies overseas, so also do their counterparts from various parts of the globe engage in similar activities in Botswana. Since no nation is an island unto itself, this exchange of students, and human resources is a good example of interdependence, enabling the flow of knowledge across national borders. Student aid and scholarships from different countries and overseas organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Rockefeller Foundation,

the British Council, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) are made available to qualified students to study in foreign countries in various fields. Further, it is recognized that universities engage in exchange programmes of students, academic staff and researchers to forge links which may lead to better programmes and international recognition.

At the University of Botswana, there are examples of exchange programmes in the areas of teaching and research. For example, there are links between the Medical Education Unit of the University and some Universities in South Africa and Australia for the training of medical students from Botswana. Another example is the link between the Office of Research and Development of the University of Botswana and the University of Tromsø, Norway in promoting research on the Barsawa/San people—the first indigenous people of Botswana, through the development and the encouragement of external interactions, contracts and funding (University of Botswana Calendar, 2001/2002).

Health Services

The constitution of the World Health Organization states “the enjoyment of highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition” (WHO, 1948). This assertion is applicable to all global citizens irrespective of their national origins. To this end, the provision of efficient care delivery across the globe is not seen as the sole responsibility of any nation but can be improved through interdependence. For example, drugs manufactured in some parts of the world by pharmaceutical industries such as Pfizer, PhRma, and Merck, are made available to other countries. Medical equipment manufactured in one part of the universe is distributed to medical institutions in other parts of the globe. Also, the services rendered by charity organizations such as ‘doctors without borders’ are a form of interdependence.

In the health sector, many employees from the USA, UK, Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa, can be found working in Botswana. The referral hospitals located in Gaborone and Francistown, other public and private hospitals as well as primary health clinics, can boast of medical doctors, nurses, radiographers, physiotherapists and allied workers from different parts of the world. Botswana has many members of its medical profession working all over the globe, nurses in particular are recruited by many developed countries. This provides a very good example of interdependence.

Transportation

Transportation is a very important phenomenon in the movement of people and goods all over the world. Due to advancements in technology, the distance between continents and various locations has reduced tremendously in terms of time. The manufacture of high speed cars, ocean vessels and aircraft has made it possible for travelers to cross countries and continents in just a few hours. Botswana is linked by a railway system joining South Africa and Zimbabwe. Air services connect Botswana with international airports in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and other parts of the world. The road network, popularly referred to as the Trans-Kalahari Highway, links Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

These road networks, air services and railway systems enhance the flow of people, ideas, and goods from and to Botswana. In fact, one of the most significant and visible features of Botswana is the presence of many races from all over the world who, contribute to the diversity of the country through various professional activities and enhance cultural pluralism.

Alongside advanced transportation systems, communication through modern technology has helped to enhance cultural pluralism. Telephones and internet services link Botswana to the rest of the world.

Membership in World Organizations

Botswana is a member of various organizations including the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Union, the African, Caribbean, and the Pacific group of countries covered under the Lome Convention, the Commonwealth, the World Bank, the International Monetary Bank, and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (Republic of Botswana, 1991). Since many countries all over the world also belong to some of these organizations, joint decisions reached at crucial meetings result in interdependent activities for the continued peace and stability of the world. These examples not only illustrate interdependence but also illustrate that actions taken by individuals in one part of the world can have a widespread international effect (Adeyemi, 1996). Certain decisions must be reached jointly by world bodies before any action can be taken, for example, the United Nations is responsible for monitoring the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other critical global issues. The fact that Botswana is a member of the United Nations has enabled it to participate in peacekeeping activities under the banner of the United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Lesotho and the Congo. Botswana has many embassies and consulates in various parts of the world.

Conclusion

The adage that ‘a tree cannot make a forest’ is relevant in this paper. Since no nation can stand and operate alone politically, economically, and psychologically, it then becomes necessary for nations to interact with one another and be interdependent. It is through interdependence that an understanding of people far and near can be enhanced through education, technology, communication, health facilities, and ideas—essential ingredients for the advancement of the human race.

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