

CULTURE MAPS: A TOOL FOR BUILDING COMPETENT GLOBAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Kwadwo A. Okrah
Indiana University South Bend

Abstract

A recurring problem in global and multicultural education in United States of America is the issue of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. To resolve the problem is to lessen cultural conflicts in American schools. Thus, it is important to understand different cultures and their mores. It is a common knowledge that the first contact with different cultures always has the potential of causing conflicts and culture shock. Therefore, it is important to prepare students to understand the peculiarities of cultural differences in other societies and countries to avoid such difficulties. This paper intends to utilize cultural mapping to forge a new way of effective cross-cultural communication through tolerance, understanding and acceptance. Data was collected from students in selected non-American cultural backgrounds living in and outside United States and American students. The conclusions from diverse students' own stories have led to appropriate strategy that would control prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination in our schools.

Keywords: Multicultural education, Global education, curriculum, diversity, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, Africa, USA.

Introduction

Like teachers, children from different backgrounds come to school with their own types of personal and social orientations. Some of them get fixated to the orientations they come to school with whereas others are able to manage and get over their inward looking demeanor. As discussed by Brown and Kysilka (2002), being part of the economically and politically powerful United States has affected the viewpoints of many Americans towards other countries and continents. Because of their privileged positions as US citizens, they tend to be insular and poorly informed about issues elsewhere. For proper cohabitation between and among ethnic, cultural and national groups, a need to for identity clarification, which leads to multiethnicity and globalism, is necessary.

Cultural mapping is one of the effective ways to understand cultures of people of different nationalities (Kudrevatykh, 2012). Professor Kudrevatykh believes that cultural mapping prepares the ground for successful cultural communication. Since cultural mapping attracts attention to cultural identities and cultural differences, it makes culture more visible and enriches cultural profiles of the communities living in certain areas and having multidimensional relations with each other. Indeed, people belonging to different nationalities and cultures have different cultural anticipations. Since we all belong to specific cultures, we use our own cultural lenses to produce the illusion of the only possible and the only acceptable vision of the world, lifestyles and mentalities. But if we go beyond our own cultures, develop a different world view, outlook and attitude, we will realize the specifics of our own consciousness, and see the differences and even conflicts of cultures (Kudrevatykh, 2012).

Also, Okrah (2011, referring to Adichie (2009) warns about the dangers of “single stories”. In Adichie’s judgment, our lives and our cultures are composed of overlapping stories and that, if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding. The truth is that single stories create stereotypes and make the account become the norm and the definitive story of that person. It robs people of dignity and makes our recognition of equality of humanity difficult and, emphasizes difference rather than similarity (Okrah, 2011).

Formation of stereotypes through cultural conflict

The complex and relationships and interactions between cultures create conflict. For example, the first encounter with a foreign culture and a foreign language reveals conflict of culture. In Kudrevatykh’s (2012) assertion, contact with another culture takes place in two ways; directly and indirectly. Direct contacts occur with direct communication with representatives of other cultures. Indirect contacts happen through political, economic, cultural and social news, modern pop music (culture), the Internet, social network. These are transmitted by the local mass media, found in national websites that are published in the local language. That is how national cultural and linguistic stereotypes are formed.

By definition, stereotyping implies the inaccurate description of a category of people even when there is evidence to contradict such description (Okrah, 2006). Kudrevatykh (2012) defines stereotype as a generalized notion of certain social and ethnic groups’ characteristic features. Stereotypes are socially oriented, stable, and emotional, reflecting the so-called standardized image or idea of the social phenomenon or object. Social conditions and previous experience leads one to develop customary relations to an object or phenomenon. Cultural stereotypes also reflect socially accepted norms of behavior, traditions and ways of life of the society causing emotional perception. Stereotypes are treated as a part of conceptual worldview, culturally based idea of the object, person and norms. All the ideas are transmitted through language units, forming a stable cultural and linguistic image of the representatives of various cultures.

Two forms of stereotypes are distinguished by socio-linguists: auto-stereotypes and hetero-stereotypes. Auto-stereotypes reflect images of people about themselves and their own cultures whereas hetero-stereotypes reflect images of people about other cultures. It should be borne in mind that hetero-stereotypes are more critical.

Like culture, stereotypes are both dynamic and static or rigid. They are dynamic because they are based on random facts and, accordingly could be distorted. They are also static or rigid because it is difficult to alter or correct them and as a result, they might impede tolerance or acceptance, form cultural barriers and obstruct communication leading to misinterpretation. Although cultural conflict can cause culture shock in societies with different cultures, cultural mistakes are more painful than language errors (Ter-Minasova, 2004).

Diverse worldviews

A comparative study of perceptions and cultures can identify cultural stereotypes formed in society. The results would ease culture shocks, cultural mistakes, and language errors, which is the concern of intercultural communication, multicultural and global education. Important aspect of cross-cultural communication is the relationship and

reciprocity of a language, thought and culture. Culture co-exists and functions as a whole, reflecting and shaping the real world. Thus, scholars distinguish three worldviews that represent the real world: the picture of the world, the cultural (or conceptual) worldview and the language world (Ter-Minasova, 2004). The three worldviews are not mutually exclusive. They are interconnected with the cultural worldview determining the real picture of the world and the language world. Thus the cultural worldview reflects the basic concepts and categories of the real world and its subjective interpretations. The cultural worldview, however, is dynamic, constantly changing and varying. The language world, on the other hand, verbalizes the cultural worldview, observes, holds and transmits it from generation to generation. Kunkaanniemi (2001) opines that language can describe everything that is kept in the cultural worldview but it does not fix every detail. Since language reflects all the achievements, the whole cultural experience of the people that was acquired in the long history of development, it can be tagged as an “instrument of culture”

In Kudrevatykh’s (2012) observation, it is evident that different people see and reflect the real world in their own language patterns. People perceive and conceive various principles of categorization of reality from diverse cultural and linguistic stereotypes that reflect differences and uniqueness of their historical and cultural ways of their development. This cultural spectrum is responsible for people’s adherence to the specificity of their languages and primary lexicon.

The aim of this study was to examine hetero-stereotypes that reflect images of America in cultural and linguistic pictures of African students (and Africans in general). Those hetero-stereotypes were compared with auto-stereotypes of America and Africa as described by carries of the different cultures. As a result I was able to detect similarities and differences between the formed stereotypes.

The experiment:

Between the spring and fall 2012, I conducted a survey of about 100 African students in the United States: The survey involved about 75-100 full-time and part-time students in different universities and colleges in South Bend area, from 20-40 years old. 25- 30 students were interviewed in Ghana in a focus group about their knowledge and concerns about the United States of America. Respondents were both males and females. From the American side, 75-100 students from Indiana University completed the survey. In both African and American survey, the response rate was about 75-80 percent. I was more interested in the qualitative aspect of the survey but the quantitative (numbers) gave me a sense of the majority response and the areas where most respondents had interest about themselves and the other (auto and hetero)

Students were asked to respond in a few words (short answers) their perception of Africa and United States of America on different options as follows:

1. Africa or the USA and its people – Your knowledge or perception of the place through experience, stories, media, etc.
2. The main personality traits of the Africans / Americans – Knowledge and perception of the disposition and behavior of the people, race, ethnicity, appearance, etc. through experience, stories, media, etc.

3. Modern life in Africa and the United States – Social, political, economic and cultural life, systems, structure, organization of life, etc. through experience, stories, media, etc.
4. Nature and landscape – Climatic and vegetation zones, common natural disasters, sceneries, etc. through experience, stories, media, etc.
5. Proper names – Name, places, personalities and things considered to be important and worthy of preserving or knowing through experience, stories, media, etc.
6. Current affairs – knowledge of present state of the place, awareness of things happening in the area – politics, culture, ethnic and racial issues and the resultant effects, etc. through experience, stories, media, etc.

The responses from the survey are summarized in the following table:

	Africa (auto-stereotype)*	Africa (hetero-stereotype)**	USA (auto-stereotype)***	USA (hetero-stereotype)****
<i>The place and its people</i>	-Hospitality (10%) - Cultures (20%) -Hot (very hot) temperature (15%) - Religious (10%) Beautiful, villages, Kinship -Inward beauty (2%) -Family (10%) -Traditional government (chieftaincy) (2%)	-cold, snow (24%), large (10%), rich (20%), beauty, Washington, New York, California, Hollywood (2%), democracy (10%), freedom (5%), natural resources, rivers, lakes, - no tribal wars, fighting other countries (10%), educated, high literacy rate	- freedom (15%), democracy (14%), winter, philanthropy (5%), kindness, Hollywood, White house, congress, well educated (10%), industrial setting, melting pot (5%), land of the free	- wars with neighboring countries, tribal wars (12%), famine (10%) crowded homes, low political image - the <u>country</u> is poor (25%), very poor, starving (5%), uneducated, - It is a third-world <u>country</u> . (10%), Very HOT (10%), they are not very free, pretty
<i>The main personality traits of the people</i>	Friendly (20%), black, passionate, excitement, determination, hardworking (20%), nice, black beauty (5%), discipline children (4%), fear of their Gods, religious (14%)	Friendly (15%), white skin, kind (5%), sympathetic, homosexual groups, racist (15%), unfriendly (10%), stingy, mean (4%), open, confident (10%), rich (10%), nice, tall and handsome, beautiful,	Hospitality, patriotism (5%), openness, sincerity (4%), happy, compassion, hardworking (10%) pragmatic, unfriendly, easily offended, litigious (10%), rude (5%), money hungry, knowledgeable/well educated (25%), strong willed, selfish, violent (2%), heroic, movie stars, business people,	Traditionalists, culture (15%), archaic customs/ outmoded customary practices (20%), caring, community driven (10%), family values (10%), extended family, lazy, proud and simple, not “simple minded” but living a simple life, <u>SOME</u> are educated, nice, smart`

Modern life of the place	Stocks, nice houses (10%), nice cars (10%), computers and internet cafes (15%), cell phones (15%), open markets, shopping mall, governments, schools	Subway trains (20%), drinks, fine liquor (4%), Sports (football baseball, basketball) – (15%), universities/schools (5%), stock market (10%), democracy (15%), high technology (15%), racism, beautiful girls, pornography (2%),	Democracy (15%), capitalism/market economy (15%), sports, medals at Olympic games, public transportation (10%), movie theatres, strong economy (5%), tolerance, “melting pot” (5%), ‘Salad bowl’, computers and high-tech (20%), big homes (4%), technology dependent, Social class (middle class, upper class, lower class (5%)	Many huts, some houses, polygamy (5%), corruption (15%), villages (12%), democracy, open markets, few computers, few cell phones, very poor (30%), fighting off lions, no electricity, don’t know (15%), poor class, lower class, bad economy (5%)
Nature and landscape	Rain forest (15%), long rivers (5%), mountains (10%), savanna (5%), deserts (5%), mangrove swamps, rift valleys, Wet and dry season (5%)	Snow, snow, cold, cold (25%), frosty, Nice buildings (5%) and statues, wooden houses, big lakes (5%), mountains (5%), tunnels, tornadoes and hurricanes (10%)	The great lakes (10%), vast (5%), snow (5%), climate – four seasons (4%), earthquakes (5%), tornadoes (5%), hurricanes (5%), wildfires, forests, mountains (4%), deserts, farmlands (10%), cities, suburbs, pollution	Jungle (20%), desert, rivers, floods (5%), Warm (5%), savannah, rainforests (1%), grassland, mountains, very few cities (5%), wild life (8%), humid, dry, hot (10%), elephants, lions (4%), no trees, no roads, no houses
Proper names	Ghana, Africa (10%), Accra, Nelson Mandela (15%), Kofi Annan (2%), Kenya, South Africa, Nairobi, Lagos, Goodluck (1%), Jonathan, Kwame Nkrumah (4%) Sirleaf Johnson (3%), Monrovia	Barack Obama (12%), Bill Clinton (8%), Bush (5%), Washington (4%), Lincoln, Martin Luther King (7%) New York (8%), White House, Statue of liberty,	Barack Obama (20%), Bill Clinton (4%), George Washington (2%), Washington DC (5%), New York (5%), California, Chicago, White house (10%), Pentagon (5%)	Africa (5%), Nelson Mandela (20%), Shaka Kahn, Mahabwe, Okrah, don’t know (10%), President of Africa (2%)
Current affairs	African Union (10%), Death of about three African presidents this year, Conflict between Sudan and South	American presidential elections (15%), Obama vs. Romney (10%) American troops in Afghanistan (5%), American troops in	Presidential Elections (20%), Partisan (4%) American troops in Afghanistan (8%), recession (5%), fighting in Middle East, people, getting	Don’t know (15%), Kony 2012 (5%), Kony wars, AIDS epidemic (10%) poverty (6%), starvation (4%), fighting in Egypt (3%), freedom in

	Sudan, The newest country in Africa is South Sudan (5%), elections (5%)	Iraq (5%), same sex marriage, civil union,	shot (5%), bad economy (5%) Strong economy (5%)	South Africa (2%)
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With reference to Kudrevatykh’s (2012) work on culture maps between Russian and Taiwanese students I believe that the above parameters provide basic understanding of the most basic aspects of life in the country (or continent) and the people living in this country (continent), forming cultural and linguistic pictures of the country (continent) and its inhabitants at the “grassroots” level. In order to identify cultural worldviews and the language world of America and Africa, I compared the list of most frequently used words.

- * African view of Africa
- ** African view of USA
- *** American view of USA
- **** American view of Africa

Categorical analysis

1. As we can see from the above list, some of the responses overlap but other responses are completely different if not the opposite. Mainly two features – a cold and big country covered with snow, represent cultural image of America for the African students. Though it is a cold country, it is beautiful and rich in natural resources, rivers and lakes. The different cities and states like Washington DC, New York, California, Hollywood also represent the image of America

The Americans, on the other hand, have the cultural image of Africa as being poor with crowded homes, famine, tribal warfare and wars with neighboring countries, low political image, “the *country* is poor, it is a third-world *country*”

The political image or democracy of America appears straightforward. They talked about freedom, independence, liberty and its patriarchal character (the dominant role of men in the society). By the way, the despotic character and the wars of Americans were marked by an aged student (a 40 year old guy, whereas younger students note the democratic character of the country). This indicates clear changes in vision of America as a free country by younger generation. Single mentions connect America with images of American people, girls mostly beautiful. Individual references are also associated with sports and cultural life in the country.

The image of Africa by Americans appears to hang around the same longstanding view with most respondent referring to the continent as a country, third world and poor.

Africans, however, believe in the positive aspect of their lifestyle, arrogating to themselves the qualities of hospitality, religiosity and inward beauty.

2. As far as personality traits are concerned, while Africans claimed they are friendly, determined and hardworking, Americans dwelt on African traditionalism, archaic and

outmoded customary practices, extended family systems and laziness, which might be responsible for the continent's underdevelopment.

The Africans spoke about the kindness, sympathy and philanthropic nature of the American people. They also mentioned individual wealth/richness ("Americans are rich!!"); they are open and confident, nice, tall, handsome and beautiful. Some respondent also mentioned that Americans are unfriendly, stingy, mean, homosexuals and racist.

However, Americans claim that they are patriotic, hospitable, open, sincere, happy people, hardworking, and pragmatic.

3. In the area of modern life, Africans pride themselves with knowledge and presence of stock market, nice houses and cars, computers and internet cafes, cell phones, open markets, shopping malls and government and private schools at all levels – primary, middle, high and tertiary. They also demonstrated knowledge of subway trains, drinks, fine liquor, all types of sports – football, baseball, basketball, tennis, golf, etc., stock market, schools, many universities, high technology, racism, beautiful girls.

However, Americans indicate for themselves the presence of democracy, sports including American football, many medals at Olympic Games, affordable public transportation, movie theatres, computers and high-technology. American description of Africans in this area was limited to some houses and many huts, polygamy, corruption, open market, a few computers and a few cell phones.

4. Nature and landscape: African respondents are knowledgeable and proud of their surroundings and speak of the different vegetation zones and climates with the appropriate names – rainforest, mountains, savannah, mangrove swamps, seasons and hot temperatures. African respondents repeatedly mentioned snow and cold about America. They also talk about nice buildings and statues, wooden houses, big lakes, mountains, tunnels, tornadoes and earthquakes.

American respondent were mostly familiar with the great lakes "HOMES", a vast country, snow, the four-season climate they enjoy, earthquakes and tornadoes. Americans think of Africa as mostly 'jungle', partly desert, rivers and flood

5. For proper names African respondent mentioned many countries in African and their capitals and some presidents by name – Ghana, Accra, Kenya, Nairobi, Egypt, Cairo, Nigeria, Abuja, Lagos, Sirleaf Johnson, Nelson Mandela.

Impressively, the African respondents demonstrated deep knowledge about American proper names. They mentioned the names of many presidents, including, Obama, Clinton, Bush Washington, Lincoln, Kennedy, etc., they White House, New York, Statue of Liberty, etc.

American respondents displayed knowledge about American proper names. They mentioned the names of presidents, states and cities.

For knowledge of African proper names, most American respondents mentioned Africa, Nelson Mandela

6. For current affairs, African respondents mentioned United Nations, Types of governments, Africa Union, War (political turmoil) in the Middle East, Terrorism, nuclear proliferation, Iran and nuclear weapons
American respondents mentioned Israel and Palestine, war on terrorism, Middle East, American troops in Afghanistan

Analysis

From the foregoing, it is clear that a greater percentage of Africans sampled have positive image about themselves and of Americans. The only areas of concern were in the area of race, sexual orientation, and the perception of some respondents about the personality traits of Americans – stingy, mean, and unfriendly. They also have fair knowledge about themselves and about Americans.

Americans, on the other hand, have less knowledge about the African people and the continent of Africa. It was interesting to note that some American respondents still referred to African as a country as in the responses, “*the country is poor, it is a third-world country”*

Hetero-stereotypes of African students show they have a positive image of America. Those hetero-stereotypes are often formed on similar patterns of their local auto-stereotypes. For American students, cultural and linguistic picture of America is a more socially, culturally and emotionally-motivated and is quite controversial. This might cause confusion and misunderstanding in intercultural communication and multicultural literacy. The most vulnerable are the models of “modern life”, “nature and landscape”, and “proper names”. It is important to focus on the inconsistencies of social and cultural worldview of American students.

Lessons and pedagogy

Although the catastrophes in the African continent cannot be overlooked, there is the need for a balance of the stories. For example, there is the need to talk about poor but hardworking Africans; insufficient medical care but heart procedures performed in Nigerian, Ghanaian, South African and other African hospitals, Traditional and contemporary music composed and sang in English, French and other African languages; polygamy but female lawyers challenging some laws in their respective countries and many other developments. Also, a person’s experience with one or two people used as a yardstick to measure Americans as being unfriendly, mean and stingy would not be a fair assessment of a country with a population of over 300 million people.

In teaching or incorporation multiculturalism and globalism in our schools and classrooms, it would be appropriate to bear in mind that constructive relationship building is reliant on a one’s ability to learn from the differences of others (Patten, 2008). As different countries and people, we can never be the same apart from being of the same human species. Failing to notice the differences and the diversity, and not approaching it with an open mind is a fundamental error we all make hence we experience culture shock whenever we travel outside of our country. Thus, it is important for teachers and students to identify ways to remove stereotyping and prejudice from school environment.

The best approach in an attempt to get rid of stereotyping from schools is to start with a definition of the concept. According to Patten (2008), stereotyping or labeling is the social

categorization we assign to those we meet [and things associated with them]. It is a human instinct to literally label people as we meet them. In essence stereotyping is a 'lazy' social habit we have developed.

Prejudice behavior and discrimination are a direct result of stereotyping. Prejudice is an immediate by-product of social stereotyping. Prejudiced behavior leads to discrimination. The less familiar the information and the more complicated it is to disseminate, the more we are prone to assigning a 'general' label to it. Discrimination is an immediate by-product of refusing to accept others for their individuality (Patten, 2008). Such behavior is both deconstructive and primitive. As the name explains, to be prejudice is to pre-judge an individual. Instead of awarding people the equal opportunity to prove their personal worth we assign a predefined label to them. Based on assumption, we place individuals into groups of relevancy. On the whole, prejudice behavior instills negativity and unfair criticism about a category of people.

Attempted Solutions:

Solutions to for multicultural and global education mindset have been discussed variously from dimensions of multicultural and global education to approaches to teaching. For simpler solutions to the problems, I agree with Patten's (2008) solution of stereotypes in the business environment, which is also applicable in the school environment.

First, teachers must encourage students to learn to interact with other students and people on a more personal level. Personal relationships are one of the most insightful clues to one's own emotional maturity. It expands one's perceptions and opens one's mind to diversities. Also, personal relationships are based on one's ability to interact with others and harmonize the disclosure of personal information.

Secondly, students must be encouraged to choose to interact with all forms of diversity among students – race, ethnicity, gender, religion, exceptionality, ability, socio-economic status, etc. They should open themselves up to learning about different cultures and ethnicities and develop mutual sharing and respect.

Third, teachers should encourage students to make a commitment to expanding their knowledge since the demands of multiculturalism and globalization has become the order of the day and that one cannot claim global citizenship without global literacy. All students must therefore apply efforts to their endeavor to learn from things they don't understand. We must develop classroom activities that would ensure commitment and patience in students' quest to remove stereotyping from the classroom and the school.

Fourth, Teachers should encourage students to keep an open mind. Students must learn to empathize. They should put their feet in others shoes. They should consider their experiences based on their situation, remember that conceited behavior is counter-productive and to learn to practice humility

Lastly, teachers must encourage students to make it their goal to remove all forms of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination from their school without coercion from an external force.

Teachers also need to understand that little things can make a big difference. For example, we need to learn to say a child's name correctly. Don't change [Akwas to Quason], Marisol to Marcy or Vinh to Vinny. As simplistic as it may sound, this basic rule of respect is violated daily in the classrooms across the nation (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Although learning many names in different languages may be time consuming for teachers, it is the first step in demonstrating respect for students' identities. Thus, it is not culturally justifiable that given the pressure to conform that all students face, some of them would readily accede to having their names changed so that they can fit in.

Conclusion

Learning from each other's differences and having a slice of humble pie is all that is required to eliminate stereotyping. There are so many things that we can learn from each other's differences. We cannot expect to move forward if we continue to refer back to past stereotyping.

Any scholarship that lacks real exposure to other traditions, cultures and philosophies prepares scholars to live with the attitude of multicultural and global deficiency that produces stereotyping and prejudice. Teachers and educators need to prepare students with the aim to encourage and guide them achieve cross cultural awareness, perspective consciousness, systemic and state of the planet awareness.

Another ideal goal of any socio-cultural education is a creation of multicultural linguistic identity. By and large, using single stories, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination that come from miseducation, misunderstanding, misinformation, and ignorance dispossess, malign, break the dignity, disempower, and disrespect other people. We should instead use plural stories to repair the broken dignity, empower and humanize the people we so detest and struggle with because of lack of knowledge, miseducation and misunderstanding, misconstruction, and misinterpretation.

Recommendations

It is my recommendation that other cultures duplicate the data so that we could draw appropriate generalizations about stereotyping as a disturbing and demoralizing concept in multicultural and global education.

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Author Information

Kwadwo A. Okrah, Ph.D.
Indiana University South Bend