

GLOBALIZATION AND CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

By

Augustine Okereke Ogwudire
College of Education (Technical),
P. M. B. 1000,
Arochukwu.

Helen Nnennaya Ukpabi, (Ph.D)
College of Education (Technical),
P. M. B. 1000,
Arochukwu.

and

Gabriel Ogbuagu Okoko (Ph.D)
School of Arts Education,
College of Education (Technical),
P. M. B. 1000,
Arochukwu.

Abstract

The importance of globalization as it concerns higher education cannot be overemphasized. This paper examined the relevance of the changes which were introduced in higher education in Nigeria through globalization. Higher education has witnessed series of changes which are meant to improve the system and enhance its capability to produce competent personnel for national development. The paper also observed that changes made so far seem ineffective because adequate consideration has not been given to the needs of Nigerians in addressing the challenges posed by globalization to the education system. The paper examined that globalization has much impact on education and also that the visible challenges in the Nigerian higher education are two dimensional-knowledge and skills in new ideas. The paper concluded that availability of personnel, funds, facilities and political-will will enhance

change in higher education in Nigeria. Recommendations were also made which include government funding etc.

Globalization is said to have been coined by Reises and Davies in 1994 to mean the process of integrating societies by removing geographical and political constraints. Economic Commission for Africa (2000) remarked that globalization refers to changes occurring at the global level, which in several ways have not been in the control of individual nation states and their governments. Globalization is the integration of national economics, culture, social life, technology, education and politics. It has become a key idea in various areas: business theory and practice, has become a focus for discussion in education. Guellen (2000) defined it as a process leading to greater interdependence and mutual awareness among economic, political and social units in the world. Globalization involves the diffusion of ideas, practices and technologies. Generally speaking, globalization is the rapid increase in Cross-boarder economic, social and technological exchange. A peculiar issue though, is that globalization like several other changes cannot be wished away. This is because the new information revolution which Omekwu (2001) believed has come to replace the agrarian and industrial revolution is rapidly compressing the world into a digital global village. The revolution has led to a social process which involves a compression of time and space, shrinking distances through dramatic reduction in time taken – either physically or representationally – to cross them, so making the world smaller and in certain sense bringing human beings closer to one another (Yau, 2005).

Mojah (2004) argued that the global restriction of the economy has had major impact on higher education. He however regrets that people who benefits from global economy tend to enjoy better developed system of higher education since educational resources emanating from the global information environment are more sophisticated in developed economies than in developing countries. The fundamental objectives of globalization of higher education is to help rapid and more extensive diffusion of technology, knowledge and ideas across societies. It also contributes to establish global standards for maintaining quality education.

Globalization and Educational Change

Globalization is having a major impact on education in several ways. In financial terms most governments are under pressure to reduce the growth of public spending on education and to find other sources of funding to expand their educational system (Mann, 2002). In labour terms governments are simultaneously under pressure to attract foreign capital and this means providing a ready supply of skilled labour. Testing and standards are part of a broader effort to increase accountability by measuring knowledge production and using such measures to assess education workers and

managers. Information technology is gradually being introduced into the educational system, partly to try to expand the quantity of education at lower cost through distance education and partly to deliver higher quality education through Computer-Assisted Instruction and the use of the internet which links students in the smallest towns of every country with the rest of the world (Schifer and Meyer, 2005).

Globalized information network is the ultimate transformation of world cultures. Such responses to globalization share certain defining parameters but vary across regions, nations and localities.

Challenges of Globalization

Globalization refers to liberalization and intensification of international linkages in trade, finance, markets, production, politics and culture (Ajayi, 2004). This definition implies that people of different nations across the globe are able to influence one another easily in all aspect of life at all times and without any barrier. Tabb (2009) expatiates further when he states that globalization is an emergence of a global society in which economic, political, environmental and cultural events in one part of the world affect people in other parts. The process of globalization poses challenges to both developed and developing countries because whatever happens in one nation affects others either directly or indirectly. Nigeria as a developing nation is faced with the changes in higher education and the challenges of globalization which would be viewed from two dimensions – knowledge and skills in new ideas on commerce, industry and other aspect of technology from other countries would be highly essential.

There is also need to acquire knowledge and skills on indigenous socio-economic, political and technological activities and ensure that they are improved upon. This is to assist in making the country a self-reliant nation. It is also to ensure that Nigerians are not only able to make effective use of foreign technology but also that we are able to export our technology to foreign countries. These two aspects of globalization rely heavily on the education system. As it stands, education needs to be revolutionized in order to be able to meet these expectations. It is probably in realization of the vital role which higher education can play in meeting the challenges of globalization that the Government initiated changes in this sector. However, the changes are yet to achieve desired results.

Reasons for Failure of Changes

There are two major problems which have been oriented on the initiation and implementation of changes in Nigerian higher educational institutions. In the first instance, changes are imported from foreign countries (Europe and America) and adopted without finding out their relevance to the society. Secondly, there has not been holistic approach to most of the changes. This implies that changes are initiated and implemented without considering their consequences on other aspects of the education system and in the entire society. Education constitutes a sub-system in the entire society and whatever happens to it will have impacts on other parts of the society.

Other sources of problems are the ones connected with the nature of Nigerian society. There is lack of continuity in change implementation. In leadership of the country, a government would initiate its own policy changes without minding what the predecessors had been doing programmes which are introduced by one administration are abandoned when another government takes over without minding the quality in them. Also, there is constant change in government. At the time one government is getting familiar with the problem at hand and is setting the stage for addressing it, another government would take over.

Changes in Higher Education in Nigeria

Changes here could also be referred to as “reforms” which implies a change and improvement in different aspects of education at the tertiary level. Higher education is acquired at the third level of Nigerian education in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education and institutions offering correspondence courses (FRN, 2004). Higher education has witnessed series of changes during the colonial military and civilian administrations in the country. The society is dynamic in order to serve it adequately.

In Government’s change agenda at any period of national development, the central theme is ‘relevance’. Obanya (2007) argues that ‘relevance’ determines the use which a society would make with the educational opportunities. He states further that investment into education is likely to yield a huge change in Higher Education in Nigeria considering the dividend of Globalization if the education is relevant to the need of the society. It is not therefore surprising that the Government continued to embark on changes in education in pursuit of what is relevant to the society.

For instance, the report of Ashby Commission in 1959 contained specific recommendations on higher education reform in Nigeria. It gave birth to new Universities whose curricular and mode of operations differ from the existing University College, Ibadan (Adeshina, 2005). Also, the government introduced series of innovations into Nigeria higher education system with the conceptions and implementations of the National Policy on Education in 1977.

Many changes were introduced into Nigerian higher education system in the last decade of the 20th century. Within this period, Ezekwezili (2006) observed that the nations education sector at all levels was suffering from a systematic dysfunction. Federal Government innovations in higher education include resuscitation of National Open University of Nigeria, Unified tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), Teachers Registration Council and Post UTME screening. The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) would be the minimum teaching qualification and encouraged all Teachers to be professionally qualified (FRN, 2004).

Conclusion

Changes are necessary for higher education to be able to address the challenges posed by globalization and consequently achieve educational objectives. Relevance of programme to the needs of Nigerians constitutes an important factor to its implementation. Availability of personnel, facilities, fund and political-will could enhance the implementation of a change in higher education. It is quite obvious that new opportunities and new challenges face higher education in its role as a player in the globalized society. Higher education in Nigeria has the responsibility to help develop appropriate framework, build capacity and facilitate the implementation of these policies and regulatory frameworks at the national and international level.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby put forward towards improvements in higher education in Nigeria through globalization.

- Stakeholders in higher education business should commit to assuring the quality of global provision of higher education in an increasing diverse higher education arena and raising the awareness of stakeholders, especially students, on emerging issues in their different field. This position should aim to establish the conditions under which globalization of higher education will benefit all.
- There is need to utilize global social networking fora to infuse a stronger international platform in forming and building relationships, in order to establish an appropriate balance between global and local curriculum content in all aspects of learning programmes.
- The Government and the educational administrators should consider the effect of a new policy on all aspects of the education system. This will make them prepare for the demands which a new policy may place on other units or parts of the education system.
- Personnel, facilities and fund for execution of a change agenda should be made available before the change is introduced. The Government and other stakeholders should assist in this direction.
- Proper funding of higher education is a must, if higher education institutions in Nigeria will attain the status of becoming a global brand. There will be need for such institutions to form a strong partnership with other higher private institutions.

References

- Adesina, S. (2005). *Growth without Development: Nigeria's Educational Experience. 1914-2004*. Abeokuta: Educational Industries Limited.
- Economic Commission for Africa (2000). *Globalization, Regionalism and African's Development Agenda*; Seminar Paper unpublished.
- Ezekwesili, O. (2006). *Education Reform: Escape from Conquest through Knowledge: The Punch: Friday 17, P.52*.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC.
- Guillen, M. F. (2000). *Is Globalization Civilizing, Destructive or Feeble? A Critique of Five Key Debates in Socio-Science Literature Available from: <http://knolwedge.wharton.upenn.edu>*
- Mojah, T. (2004). *Policy Responses on Global Transformation by African Higher Education System*. Darka, CODESRIA.
- Obanya, P. (2007). *Thinking and Talking Education*. Ibadan: Evans Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Limited.
- Omekwu, C. O. (2006). *Road-map to Change: Emerging Roles for Information professionals. <http://www.emeraldinsight.com>*.
- Tabb, W. K. (2009). *Globalization*. Microsoft Encarta. Redmond, W. A.: Microsoft Corporation.