

DIMENSIONS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH

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Abstract

Education is the bedrock of every nation. Any nation can develop if the standard of education is high. Likewise the development of any nation can also be marred through the low standard of education. For a nation to reach its limelight and peak of industrialization, it is very necessary for education to be internationalized both in values and in scope.

Internationalization is a process that focuses on the worldwide flow of ideas, resources, people, economy, values, culture, knowledge, goods, services and also on technology. Therefore, for any nation to be independent and self reliant, it needs inter-exchange of ideas with other nations, integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension of ideas into their educational goals, their teaching and learning process, research and service functions of educational system. This paper however, looked into the present standard of education in Nigeria and its status and how this should be married and integrated into proper internationalization process which acknowledges and builds local, national and regional educational priorities, policies and practices to international level, dimension and scope.

Keywords: Internationalization, education, progressive, dimensions

Education can be seen as a means by which cultural values and norms of a nation are inculcated into the citizens. Through education, worthwhile behaviour is inculcated into persons. Education is a very important tool of social, political and economic upliftment and advancement of a nation; therefore education should be systematic, comprehensive, integrated and be given a chance to draw a progressive change of character in an individual. Most educational goals, objectives and aims have long-term profit, therefore, should be patiently allowed to manifest.

Internationalization of education in Nigeria should focus its attention on the total over-hauling of its individuals, groups, social institutions; and on its social, political and economic spheres which team-up together to make a nation what it wants to be. Internationalization of education is highly needed in Nigeria especially as

educational standard continuously goes down the drain. In the recent past, education was likened to an industry that produces quality products and services because it is believed that education makes a man, and man makes the world. It is therefore necessary for all hands to be on deck in the pursuit of internationalizing education in Nigeria.

Definition of Concepts

What is Internationalization? Internationalization is a process that focuses on the worldwide flow of ideas, resources, people, economy, values, culture, knowledge, goods, services and technology.

What is Internationalization of Education? Internationalization of education can be described as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension into the goals, teaching and learning, research and service functions of education system. Internationalization emphasizes the relationship between and among nations, people, cultures, institutions and systems. It stresses the concept of worldwide flow of economy, ideas and culture. It is a process of change which is tailored to meet the individual needs and interest of education entity. One cannot, however, say that there is any better or hard-fast model of internationalization. For example, adopting a set of objectives and strategies of another country which may be in vogue in that country may only negate the principles that each programme, institution or country needs to determine its individual approach to internationalization based on its own clearly articulated rationales, goals and expected outcomes because no two nation can be exactly the same in all values.

In Nigeria however, privatization has developed so much in response to “excess demand” or “differentiated demand” and encompasses the rise of private Universities throughout the nation both in secular and religious University institutions, privatization of public institutions and the exponential growth of for-profit institutions (Tilak, 2008). Marketization has entailed the corporatization of university management, weakening of faculty governance, co modification of knowledge and commercialization of learning. Many scholars argue that this has led to the decline of academic quality and shifts from the basic disciplines of professional education and from teaching to research in measuring institutional excellence (Altbach, Scolt and kreber 2001). The researcher sees internationalization of education as an entire over-hauling of its educational system and citizenry into an international education standard which paves way to a progressive and gradual march to proper civilization and development (Okparanozie, 2017).

Dynamics of Education Internationalization in Nigeria

Generally speaking, internationalization of higher institutions of learning is of course not new. In the pre-colonial and post-colonial era, higher institutions of learning were designed and served as regional communities of learning and scholarships, but the

bulk of modern universities were established in the 20th Century and were largely national in scope. Most people then, suggested that internationalization should be bringing about the convergence of the private and public lives of universities. In other words, universities are gradually recovering their “internationalist past” (Gasel-Avila, 2005).

The growth in the scale, complexity and demands for educational internationalization in Nigeria, in recent decades is often attributed to the all-encompassing phenomenon of globalization. Internationalization of education is seen both as a consequence and a catalyst of globalization. Globalization however, provides the overall context in which the internationalization of education is taking place (Altbach 2007; Scott; Kreber 2009) it is propelled by the massification of demand for higher education and the commercialization of universities. Transnational education offers an important outlet for unmet and specialized demand in the rapidly growing developing countries with their bulging youthful populations as well as critical financial and positional resources for the increasingly underfunded universities in the aging countries.

Most universities in Nigeria have not fully understood what is meant by internationalization of education; for them this, does not go beyond attending occasional international conferences, seminars and workshops or international trips sponsored by their institutions which are rarely incorporated into their teaching and research. (Dewey and Duff, 2009). A faculty or two in a university cannot internationalize the whole university, it has to be a joint effort of all lecturers’ in every category, staff and students of an institution. For instance, a faculty cannot teach global literacy when they are globally illiterate themselves nor students alone being expected to become internationalized in their learning if their lecturers are provincial or sectionalized in their personal experiences, professional interests and intellectual horizons. Even at the institutional level, an effective internationalization program establishment will depend on developing productive synergies between the institutional priorities and individual passions, systematic planning and coordination. The challenges and opportunities of internationalization are not entirely under the control of individual faculty or individual institution.

In Nigeria, motivation for internationalization should go beyond mere developmental and logics of demand and supply but economically internationalization should be justified for preparing students for careers in a globalized economy, enhancing national development and competitiveness and also as a means of generalizing extra personal income for both individual and institutions as well. Internationalization politically can as well promote understanding so essential for peace, stability and security of the global citizenship. The sociocultural imperatives also lies in the need to cultivate interculturalism so critical for the social well being of multicultural societies. Many also believe that internationalization of teaching, research and service activities of universities, also enhances the quality of education by compelling institutions to rise to

international academic standards. At the national level, internationalization tend to be largely justified in terms of its potential to develop domestic human resources to enhance national competitiveness, create strategic geo-political alliances and economic relationships, promote income-generating and commercial trading opportunities and for nation-building. At the institutional level, emphasis is usually placed on the need to enhance the institution's international profile and reputation, improve the quality of its programs, raise the international and intercultural skills of students and staff, and as a means of generating badly needed income, developing energizing linkages and networks and strengthening capacities to deal with pressing global issues and challenges (Zezeza, 2010). Emphasis however, vary among nations and institutions pending on their histories, locations, resources, ideologies and ambitions.

Dimensions of Internationalization of Education in Nigeria

Regional and global dimensions of internationalization vary quite considerably amongst different regions in Nigeria depending on the history of their existence, national and institutional resources and their geo-political locations and aspirations. These dimensions will be based on three criteria namely: discipline, methodology or research criteria of institutions in Nigeria. Whatever the criteria, it is important to develop innovative and cost-effective exchange programmes that facilitate the engagement of all stake-holders of Nigerian education in this pursuit of internationalization of education in Nigeria. All hands should be on deck if actually this should be achieved. There is need to devise programmes across the nation where Nigerian academic situations and progressive necessities will constantly be taught to Nigerian citizens to make them be aware and enlightened about local standard of education as compared to other nations. There is no question that internationalization of education has transformed the world of education and has also undergone fundamental changes itself. The key question now is whether those changes have been for better or for worse? In the area of discipline in Nigeria, this has gone to the rocks in the lives of Nigerian citizens starting from the very first person to the last average Nigeria. Internationalization cannot thrive in any nation where virtually almost all indigenes are corrupt in every ramifications of life.

In methodology, the academic diaspora has much to contribute in mediating most productively the internationalization of Nigerian education. However, the academic world alone cannot single handedly achieve this without the cooperation of all regions participating in this chase. It is possible to change the Nigerian terms of engagement or its citizens' involvement in knowledge production to strengthen the continents research capacities, raise the quality of Nigerian education profiles and booster everybody's contribution to triple dreams of self-determination, development and sincere democracy which is always ushered in through internationalization of education.

In the area of research, it is important to understand that the Nigerian community is a complex one divided by diverse intellectual and ideological tendencies,

some of which are clearly not beneficial for Nigerians. Internationalization of education in Nigeria needs to be based on a sober understanding of the mutuality of interest of all regions, that neither Nigeria nor its individual regions can succeed alone in this competitive global world without the other; therefore all institutions of higher learning in Nigeria should endeavour to join alliances with the other in the area of research methodology and encourage all education stake-holders especially the students in carrying out proper and necessary research methodologies, their lecturers giving them both moral and academic necessary support instead of engaging in trying to undermine their efforts especially those intelligent ones whom their lecturers always see as a threat to their progressive professional march to limelight.

This was opined by Horta, (2009) when he stressed that internationalization of education in underdeveloped countries of the world like Nigeria and others should generally prefer to have linkages with developed countries of the world like American universities than with universities in their own regions to boost their prestige, while for elite American universities, international linkages do little to raise their status. In short, many outside the US and certainly most within the country itself see the United States as the global standard of higher education; regardless of what models of internationalization American institutions use, whether planned or opportunistic, U.S. hegemony in global higher education currently remains unrivalled (Edwards, 2007).

Promoting the Knowledge of Internationalization of Education in Nigeria

The pressures and imperatives of internationalization cannot be wished-away. The question should not be whether to internationalize education in Nigeria but how to do it most effectively so as to pursue the strategies that strengthen their internal institutional and intellectual capabilities, qualities, reputations and competitiveness as well as their potential contribution to the historic and humanistic agendas of the Nigerian Nationalist project. It is therefore, essential to develop internationalization strategies that are simultaneously realistic and ambitious, realistic in so far as they should be anchored in concrete contemporary conditions, and ambitious in recognizing and seizing opportunities in the rapidly changing landscapes of the global political economy and international education (Kotecha, 2011). He also recognized that the lack of a clear strategic vision as in the case of Nigeria is a key to limitation in enhancing higher education. In Nigeria, there is need for various regional programs and associations which should exist throughout the Nigerian continent that will seek to promote collaboration. There is need to develop systems that are more systematic, comprehensive, integrated and robust and this will necessitate greater regional cooperation by creating standards, policies and regulations. Increased investment in research and higher institutions' participation in research and development, strengthening of graduate programs and academic staff development, improvement of facilities and working conditions for academicians will help to boost and skyrocket the progressive development of education as a result of internationalization which will

eventually portray Nigerian continent to the limelight; as has been said before, this, will also help to booster other countries contributions to Nigerian triple dreams of self-determination, development and democracy.

What is Progressive Education?

Progressive education is a pedagogical movement that began in the late nineteenth century (19thC). it has persisted in various forms to the present ... integration of entrepreneurship into education, strong emphasis on problem solving and critical thinking, group work and development of social skills (Bashir, Sajitha 2007). Progressive education is a reaction against the traditional style of teaching. It is pedagogical movement which values experience over learning facts at the expense of understanding what is being taught.

Benefits of Internationalization of Education

There are many benefits of internationalization of education; and are as follows:

- It strengthens research and knowledge production
- Internationalize the curriculum
- Diversification of knowledge
- Boosts the international profile of institution
- Boosts the ego of individuals and nation
- Enhances international cooperation and solidarity (Australian Government 2012)

Issues and Challenges Related to Internationalization

Everything that has advantages also has disadvantages. In Nigeria for instance, the demand for internationalizing education will grow very high with time, although not all of the demand of internationalization will be met by students mobility to other nations.

The number of new education providers who are delivering programs to students, faculties and researchers who are internationally mobile should always be made available, academic programs should be delivered across borders and branch campuses should be established in developing and developed countries around the world (Braskamp, 2009). There are new developments which are intended to increase access to education and meet the appetite for foreign credentials and employment which should be incorporated into the education system; there are serious issues related to the quality of academic offer, the integrity of the new types of educational providers and the recognition of credentials (Australian Government 2012) got, should be highly appreciated by the government. Internationalization when properly done, can help develop students' cognitive skills for critical, comparative and complex thinking, cultivate capacities for cross-cultural communication, adaptation, flexibility, tolerance

and empathy and enhance their ability to recognize difference and deepen their understanding of themselves, their society and learning styles. However, intercultural competence is often not clearly defined or measured by many institutions (Deardorff 2006; Stier 2006; Stronkhorst 2006). Crichton and Scarino 2007. Designing new curriculum needs academics that understand and value internationalization in their thinking, research and service activities. Unfortunately, in many countries and some disciplines, academics are untrained, unprepared and uninterested in internationalization. Moreover, internationalization is not sufficiently rewarded and the challenges of international research collaborations and development work are not always recognized and supported. Michael Stohl (2007) believes that faculty engagement is the chief challenge for developing and sustaining internationalization.

Increase in the number of foreign degree mills and accreditation mills are other realities facing students, parents, employers and the academic community at large, that is to say that international education is now struggling to deal with fake degrees and accreditations, academic credentials that are earned but not recognized and non-regulated “fly by night” institutions (Sayal, Bikas and Michael 2008). Although it is important to acknowledge innovative developments by bonafide new education providers and universities who are delivering high quality programmes and legitimate degrees through new types of arrangements and partnership; the perpetual issue of balancing costs, quality and access significantly challenges the benefits and risks of cross-border education.

Conclusion

Internationalization is a worthwhile strategy specially designed to give an international euphoria to educational institutions especially in the area of teaching, research, methodology and service functions of a university. Though, one have seen some challenges being faced by this strategy, however, comparing the benefits and the challenges, one can rightly say that it is worthwhile to co-opt and internalize this system into Nigerian education as the benefits surpasses the challenges.

Recommendations

In view of raising the standard of education in Nigeria, the following were proffered:

1. Internationalization should be implemented in both private and public institutions.
2. Government should recognize both local and foreign credentials, reduce the fees paid by these foreign students so as to attract them more.
3. Educational facilities and environment should be made conducive for learning.
4. Security of lecturers, students and staff to be ensured.
5. Proper welfare of both lecturers and their students should be assured

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