

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH

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Abstract

Internationalization of education has to do with the imparting of knowledge, skills and values associated with universal appeal and application. It is a strong instrument for diversification of goals and objectives of tertiary institutions. Presently, there is competition among tertiary institutions to internationalize. Nigeria should not be left behind. Adult education is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values. This paper reviewed recent literatures on the rationales and modes of internationalization of adult education using Knights four generic dimensions which indicated the shortcomings inherent in the activities, competencies, ethos and processes in the internationalization of adult education. This paper reviewed the rationale for internationalization of Adult and Non-formal Education in Nigeria, revealing in the process innovations and reforms that may take place in curriculum development, teaching and community service. Using the four generic perspectives of activity, competency, ethos and process, the different approaches to internationalization were explained. Strategies were suggested to overcome the constraints and challenges that prevent institutions of higher learning in Nigeria from becoming internationalized.

Key words: Internationalization, Adult education, global relevance.

Internationalization is not a new nomenclature in higher education. Colleges of Education, though national entities, are recognized as most international institutions even in time of aggressive nationalism. Internationalization tends to address the increase in border crossing activities amidst national systems of education.

According to Vaghese (2008), internationalization of education is the imparting of knowledge, skills and values which have universal appeal and application. It implies that a curriculum becomes cross-national and intercultural in nature.

According to Uche & Ahunanya (2013), there are different models of internationalization of education, namely: - international student mobility, faculty exchange and development, research collaboration, foreign language study, building international perspectives, international networks, distance education, locally supported distance education, twinning programmes, articulation programmes, franchising agreements and international quality assurance systems. These have resulted to intensified mobility of ideas, students and academic staff in Nigerian universities, leading to brain drain and capital flight – twin diseases plaguing the Nigeria academia. Internationalization can also occur in such a way that students acquire international skills without having to leave the country. Sometimes, it involves a shift from producing for national markets to international markets. This implies changing the orientation of courses offered in the domestic colleges of education, which sometimes is referred to as “internationalization at home” (Varghese, 2008). This may take place without the presence of any foreign provider at home. As distinguished from globalization with its emphasis on worldwide condition that influence perceptions of space, mobility of actions, the nature of communication and orientation to social interaction, internationalization focuses attention on the intentional actions of individuals, groups and social institutions to cross national borders in pursuit of social, economic, political or cultural benefits.

From higher educational institution perspective, Knight (1999) cited in Douglas & Nielsen (2012) defined internationalization as a matter of integrating transnational elements into the ‘purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education. That is, colleges and universities are internationalizing their behavior when they reshape their purposes to attract international students, to deploy their programmes across national borders, concentrate on internationally advantageous educational programme niches, restructure work roles or compensation systems to recruit, retain or manage employees.

On the other hand, Adult Education is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values. It can mean any form of learning adults engage in beyond traditional schooling, encompassing basic literacy to personal fulfillment as a lifelong learner. In particular, adult education reflects a specific philosophy about learning and teaching based on the assumption that adults can and want to learn, that they are able and willing to take responsibility for that learning, and that the learning itself should respond to their needs.

An Overview of Rationale for Internationalization of Adult and Non-Formal Education

To attain world class status is no doubt the ultimate goal of every higher institution since it is the only way to strategically compete among overseas counterparts. Some categorical rationales have been advanced as likely under-tones for internationalization of certain adult education programmes, projects and activities. This is often expressed with laudable pronouncements such as 'to be a top class institution for the pursuit of excellence in knowledge through learning and research, as well as in character and service to humanity' (University of Lagos Press, 2011).

Beside such universalized vision and mission, internationalization according to Babalola & Adepoju (1991) in Onyene (2013) is a reform process that takes into account the future orientation, current global actions to be tackled for improvement, maximization of resource output leading to attainment of goals and objectives. This change indispensability brings about reforms and innovations in the areas of curriculum development, structural and teaching method upturn, resulting in standard improvement, meeting future expectations, organizational effectiveness in goal accomplishment as well as increasing desire for more creativity and innovations.

Tertiary institutions would have internationalized her activities, personnel, and programmes by adopting school-wide reforms which when implemented will result in cross-border growth. This can be done by conducting regular standardized tests targeted beyond the national boundaries.

Internationalization is a strong instrument for diversification of goals and objectives. No one individual can afford to live with his or her service in isolation, which implies that any nations tertiary, formal, open and dynamic system of learning cannot grow beyond her primary locality.

According to Onyene (2013), goal internationalization widens and redefines institutional boundaries, creates proper understanding of the boundaries as a multinational institution (MNI) and demands more sophisticated stewardship and management. Proper goal definition forces the university to examine her philosophy, her structural requirements and sets her on common but critical direction. With internationalized engagements, tertiary institutions will serve better economic purpose to beneficiaries, enrich stakeholders and spur national growth and development.

From the internationalization theory, Onyene (2013) claimed that institutional efficiency and effectiveness are comparatively open for any type of assessment and accreditation. As a result, institutions will tend to have accurate boundary definition, properly established linkages with other foreign institutions and firms while remaining relevant in her specific local environment. There is therefore a continuous effort directed

at keeping the institution open, with enlarged responsibility, decentralized power and authority, clearly stipulated policy formation, free forms of designed structured elements which may include having matrix departments that would stand as both production and or sales depots simultaneously.

There will also be continuous need to expand, enhance and extend lines of communication between individuals, groups, teams, institutions with enriched multi-directional patterns in order to ensure fast-tracked results, intermittent adjustments and/or change introduction. Internationalization is therefore, a living process borne out of paradigmatic pressure which has become imperatively compelling. Since education is a primary factor of development through which changes are brought about, entrenched and perpetuated, in the wake of global competitiveness, the internal efficiency of any university in Nigeria should show evidence of her sufficiency components in terms of admission, registration, study assessment techniques and processes.

Hicks & Gullet in Onyene (2013) noted that internationalization is a democratic approach that can be regarded as property of modern organization requiring conscious and careful entrenchment to make local institutions to reach out to the outside world. This occurs through exchange programmes for learners, having collaborated study scheme, foreign research supervision, and collaborated research conduct by scholars, exchange of course teachers such as visiting professorship as well as sharing of administrative models, personnel and facilities. With internationalization, institutional planning and decision-making will take integrative pattern with each networked institution involved in the creation, coordination, stimulation of ideas, values, technical specialties and resourcing.

Approaches to Internationalization of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria

Using the four generic perspectives of activity, competency, ethos and process, Knight in Delgado-Marquez, Hurtado-Torres & Bonder (2011) explained the different approaches to internationalization by different researchers, practitioners and higher education institutions.

Activity approach

This is apparently the most prevalent approach to internationalization of adult education in the last century and it is still relevant as the incorporation of international dimension into specific educational activities determines how far the products of the system is globally acceptable. The most prevalent type of activities includes international students, development assistance and academic mobility. Some activities of higher education constitute obstacles to internationalization especially in the area of

attracting foreign students and faculty. The admission process is the most unfavourable. For instance, the central examination system by JAMB and other sets of exam by individual universities have become obstacles for accessing higher education in Nigeria. A situation where a qualified candidate does the JAMB examination four or five times before qualification does not augur well for internationalization of higher education as foreign students will not be encouraged to go through the registration hurdles not to talk about unorganized nature of other exam processes associated with the administration of Post JAMB matriculation exams.

Most West African countries according to Ahunanya & Igot (2013) do not have such hurdles for entrance into tertiary institutions. Once one qualifies with the regional West African Examination Council (WAEC) certificates, ones entry into one's institution of higher learning of choice in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Gambia is assured.

The activity of strike actions and incessant university closure is anti-internationalization. A situation where it takes an average of six sessions to complete a four session course does not augur well for the life strategic plan of students and their sponsors. Will an international student cope with such delay? The main reason Nigerian students favour cross-border education is to avoid the delay caused by strikes and interruption of academic sessions (Bashir, 2007).

Cultism is another threat to internationalization. If the safety of Nigerian students is not guaranteed, what becomes the fate of foreigners? Cultism not only promotes violence, it equally institutes all forms of insecurity in all institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Cultists destroy facilities, torture, maim and kill students, university staff as well as lecturers. Added to this are other types of brigandage such as kidnapping, gangsterism and terrorism which have extended from the micro Nigerian society to the academia.

For instance, according to Ahunanya & Igot (2013), the terrorist bombing at the Federal College of Education, Kano in April, 2016 left many people dead while at the Federal Polytechnic, Mubi in October, of the same year, 26 students were shot dead and up till now, nobody has claimed responsibility. About five heads of tertiary institutions in Nigeria have suffered in the hands of kidnappers with the whereabouts of many lecturers unaccountable. Foreign students/faculties under this state of siege, may suffer 'culture shock' without adequate protection.

The issue of improper utilization of fund, unaccountability and lack transparency in funding Nigerian universities has discouraged financial assistance from interested stakeholders according to Ahunanya, Okpara & Muraina (2010). The developmental assistance given by foreign and local Non-Governmental Organizations

(NGOs) has greatly contributed to infrastructural development in Nigerian universities. In assessing the McArthur foundations support to four Nigerian universities in 2001, Fine cited in Ahunanya & Igot (2013) noted that only two universities utilized the fund judiciously.

Competency approach

The competency approach is closely related to educational outcomes, values and attitudes of students. This approach focuses on generation and transfer of knowledge that will develop competencies in the personnel of higher education institutions to become more internationally knowledgeable and inter-culturally skilled (Knight in Delgado-Marquez, Hurtado-Terres & Bondur, 2011). Competency emphasizes the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that are important for competition in the global market place.

The Federal Government of Nigeria's 20:2020 document noted that the declining quality of education, training and skill has posed serious impediment to the employability of Nigerian graduates and has grossly undermined the competitiveness of the Nigerian labour force nationally and globally. The document equally noted that education and health which is the foundation of lifelong learning and capacity building are currently constrained by underfunding, inadequate and poor infrastructural facilities. The decay of infrastructure has resulted to overcrowding in classrooms and hostels, teaching science without practicals, inadequate library space among others. Poor access to digital library or open education resources is a discouragement to internationalization.

Ethos approach

The ethos approach to internationalization according to Ahunanya & Igot (2013) is an attempt to make more explicit in the culture of the institution the international dimension to the delivery of higher education. This approach focuses on establishing an atmosphere, beliefs and distinguishing character that encourages and fosters the development of international and intercultural values and initiatives. The academic atmosphere of Nigerian colleges of education so far does not encourage it to be addressed as the ivory tower where intellectual preoccupation will result to innovation. The incessant intra and inter conflicts and crisis within the universities various workers unions and between them has created a practical atmosphere of siege where practical survival instincts abound in decisions made as they are starved of funds.

The motivational relationship that encourages mentoring and capacity building among staff is hardly in existence as staff and faculty strive for survival. Using the research cultures as example, not many Nigerian university lecturers can afford to attend

international conference from their salary expenditure without sponsorship. The intervention of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) sponsorship of researches, conferences and book publications have recently improved the culture of teaching and research in Nigerian universities even if it is like a trickle where an ocean is needed.

According to Ahunanya & Igot (2013), recently key officers were appointed into Nigerian colleges of education; it was only two universities that had non-indigenes among the appointees whereas only few that were appointed had the requisite qualifications. A case of quota or federal character policy which is inimical to national and international perspective to education has created an atmosphere inimical to nationalism, not to talk of internationalization.

The Process approach

The process approach focuses on the integration of an international and/or intercultural dimension into academic programmes as well as the guiding policies and procedures of an institution. Process approach focuses on policies and procedures put in place to encourage internationalization. It often concerns itself with the international process that are reflected in the teaching, research and community service that go on in the Nigerian higher institutions of learning. Internationally, the processes of lecture delivery has become digitalized resulting in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), yet it is only the National Open University of Nigeria that has introduced it on a minimal scale due to the challenges of technology adaptation and power problems. The processes of research in Nigerian universities have not resulted in any Nigerian university included among the first one thousand by the world's three ranking organizations of Times Higher Education Supplement (THES), London; the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) compiled the Shanghai Jiaotong University, China and the Webometrics ranking from Cyber-metrics Laboratory in Spain. This shows that most researches from Nigerian Universities are not of international standard, hence the urgent need to review the research process (Okojie, 2008).

Constraints to Internationalization of Adult Education in Nigeria

The following have been enumerated as the constraints to internationalization of adult education in Nigeria:

- 1) Paucity of funds allocated to the education sector in the national budget has become a hydra-headed monster to growth and development of colleges of education and universities in Nigeria. This, with the increasing deplorable state of the higher

institutions' carrying capacity regulation according to Oyene & Sola (2010) has impacted negatively on the university's services especially between 1981 and 1991.

2) Nigerian colleges of education and universities also battle the expensive incapability to align some courses of study with labour market demand. This is followed by the indiscriminate upsurge in several departments of new courses in a copy-and-paste manner, renaming of courses in various faculties without adjusting content and outlines, hasty floating of centres or boards for new programmes, total lack of conformity to international standard as well as unsellable nature of some courses.

3) At independence, Nigeria needed human capital in order to have quality work force. As a result, emphasis was not placed on the production of well-educated and well-rounded graduates and most times they are churned out on large numbers which internalization prudence reverses drastically. The truth is that the resources needed to produce hugely sophisticated manpower are either non-existent or grossly inadequate.

4) Without vivid understanding of the circumstances and environment in which they display and practice with acquired skills, globalization cannot empower institutions to indirectly peer-review each other.

5) The most pervading of all the challenges to internationalization is the poor capacity of Nigerian tertiary institutions for basic and applied researches. Nigerian universities according to Oyene & Sola (2010) dangle between 16 and 24 percent of national research capacity, hence not contributing enough to national development. Research findings are data base for policy-making, raw materials for production functions of industries, information as feedback to practitioners and it provides the basis for advocacy, even for passing national bills.

Strategies to New Realities and Global Relevance

The following have been suggested as strategies for internationalization in answer to the question of what kind of internationalization will be appropriate to solve problems of adult education in Nigeria:

1) In order to internationalize the entrance into Nigerian institutions of higher learning, a one-time, online examination programme of global standard should be put in place to encourage foreigners' access Nigerian institutions of higher learning with the minimum required qualification.

2) The effect of incessant closure of Nigerian institutions of higher learning can be reduced if formal agreements are entered into for twinning model with foreign institutions among institutions of higher learning as advocated by the National Universities Commission Guideline (2010) such that as students are at home because of

closure, they can be studying and running the programmes of the twin universities. However, the best is avoidance of closures at all such that unions devise alternative strategies to make demand on government.

3) In improving the training and skill acquisition of Nigerian students for internationalization, international cooperation should be exploited at institutional level using the partnership model where colleges of education and universities partner and network with foreign ones who are world class in known field of study to run e-workshops/conferences and seminars in the required fields.

4) Cross campus research collaboration and joint research activities with foreign universities will help in fostering global standard research processes.

5) Scholars should continuously submit themselves to self-development retreats, seminars, workshop and conferences in order to up-date themselves to international standard.

Conclusion

Virtually all institutions of higher education, public and private have evolved into global actors, following the trend in other industries. The influence of internationalization on the character and behavior of higher education institutions has become a major theme in recent research. There is competition among world class universities to embrace internationalism. Nigeria should not be left behind for there is need for her to work together with other parts of the world to address global challenges. This paper reviewed the rationale for internationalization of Adult and Non-formal Education in Nigeria, revealing in the process innovations and reforms that may take place in curriculum development, teaching and community service. Using the four generic perspectives of activity, competency, ethos and process, the different approaches to internationalization were explained. Strategies were suggested to overcome the constraints and challenges that prevent institutions of higher learning in Nigeria from becoming internationalized.

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