

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF NIGER DELTA UNIVERSITY WILBERFORCE ISLAND AMASSOMA BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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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 can also be seen as an intellectual or academic centre where international standards are set and the nation's high level manpower are produced for all facets of national development both for the present and future generation. This paper therefore, examined the internationalization of the Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, in terms of staff and students' mobility, adequate funding, conferences of international standards, with a view to ensuring that it is not left behind. The paper also looked at the area of cross-campus research collaboration where the Niger Delta University lectures partner with their foreign world-class counterparts in order to meet up with what obtains in the league of universities in the world.

The subject of internationalization of higher education has been one of the most discussed issues in academia around the world. Experts in the higher education believe that this subject is a new paradigm and inevitable approach in the universities and curriculum (Ghasempoor, Liaghatdar, & Jafari, 2011). Internationalization has a multiplicity of definitions. According to Ghasempoor, Liaghatdar, and Jafari, (2011) internationalization refers to the process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching. Research and service functions of the institution: it is also a term that is being used progressively to discuss the international dimension of higher education.

Since the development of this definition in the early nineties, internationalization of higher education has evolved. Knight (2008) defined internationalization as a process of integrating international and cultural dimensions into the teaching, research and service functions of the education institution. Knight also indicated that internationalization is changing the world of higher education and globalization is changing the world of internationalization. Althach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009) defined internationalization as the variety of policies and programmes that universities and governments implement to respond to globalization. Some of the programmes include creation of international programmes departments, exchange programmes, cross-border distance education, and e-learning. In the recent years, the international dimension of higher education has become more prominent on the agenda of many governments, tertiary institutions, students organizations and accreditation agencies

Higher education has become increasingly international in the past decade as more and more students choose to study abroad, enrol in foreign educational programmes and institutions in their home country, or simply use the Internet to take online courses at colleges or universities in other countries. Delivering foreign educational programmes and institutions so that students can study at a foreign college without leaving home has been largely driven by educational institutions themselves.

It has been made easier by institutional frameworks which grant substantial autonomy to higher educational institutions and the policies adopted by receiving countries.

Going abroad to study is only one form of cross-border education. A new option is taking a degree or other post-secondary course offered by a foreign university online without leaving their home country. Programme and institution mobility has grown over the past decade and is likely to meet a growing demand in the future. Programme mobility is the second most common form of cross-border higher education after student mobility. It involves cross-border distance education, including e-learning, generally supplemented by face-to-face teaching in local partner institutions, but mainly takes the form of traditional face-to-face teaching offered via a partner institution abroad. Institution mobility is still limited in scale, possibly because it involves more entrepreneurial risk, but it has become an increasingly important feature of cross-border education. It corresponds to foreign direct investment by educational institutions or companies. The typical form of institution mobility is the opening of foreign campuses by universities and foreign learning centres that educational institutions provide. It may also involve the establishment of a distinctly new rather than affiliated educational institution or the takeover of all or part of a foreign educational institution.

There are many aspirations that serve as driving forces for internationalization. These include, but are not limited to the desire to promote mutual understanding, the migration of skilled workers in a globalised economy, institutional ambition to generate additional revenues and the necessity for emerging economies to build a more educated workforce in their home countries. The aforementioned internationalization driving forces also serve as four different approaches to cross-border higher education. Three of them – skilled migration, revenue generation, capacity building – have a strong economic drive and have emerged in the 1990s while the fourth, mutual understanding has a longer history (OECD, 2004)

According to OECD, the mutual understanding approach encompasses political, cultural academic and development aid goals. It allows and encourages mobility of domestic and foreign students and staff through scholarship and academic exchange programmes as well as supports academic partnerships between educational institutions. This approach does not generally involve any strong push to recruit international students. The skilled migration approach shares the goals of the mutual understanding approach, but gives stronger emphasis to the recruitment of selected international students and aims at attracting talented students to work in the host country's economy.

Within the skilled migration approach, students are supplemented by active promotion of a country's higher education sector abroad, combined with an easing of the relevant visa or immigration regulations. This approach can have a variety of targets, such as student from certain areas, post-graduates or research students rather than undergraduates, or students in a specific field. This approach generally results in a rise in the number of international students. The revenue-generating approach shares the rationales of the mutual understanding and skilled migration approaches, but offers higher education services on a more or less full-fee basis, without public subsidies. The capacity-building approach encourages cross-border higher education, however delivered as a relatively quick way to build an emerging country's capacity. As previously stated, the mutual understanding approach encourages scholarship and academic exchanges. Scholarship programmes supporting the onward mobility of domestic students, teachers, academics and students are important policy instruments.

Internationalization is not a new nomenclature in higher education. Universities, 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.

A University is the highest level of educational institution established for the purpose of manpower training, research and community service. It is an educational institution where advanced knowledge and diverse skills are acquired in order to meet up with the high level manpower needs of any nation.

It is also seen as an intellectual or academic centre where international standards are set and the nation's high-level manpower is produced for all aspects of national development both for the present and future generations. The goals of university education and of course, tertiary-education in Nigeria, as spelt out by the National Policy on Education (2013:12) are: to contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training; to develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individuals and society; to develop the intellectual capacity of individual to understand and appreciate their local and internal environment; to acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society; to promote and encourage scholarship and community service, to forge and cement national unity; and to promote national and international understanding and interactions. Nigeria as a nation came into being in 1914, and had her independence from the British in 1960. Nigeria's first university education came into existence in 1948 following the establishment of the university college, Ibadan. This first university education established had a special international relationship with the University of London. This international relationship was focused in two areas of curriculum development and implementation of staff mobility; and award of degrees and certificates. At independence in 1960, an indigenous full-fledged university was established and named "The University of Nsukka".

Two years after the attainment of Nigeria's independence, three other new universities were established following the recommendation of the Ashby commission. These Universities were: The University of Lagos, University of Ife (Now Obafemi Awolowo University) and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria). Still in the same year, the University College, Ibadan set up in 1948 was upgraded to a full-fledged University. Consequent upon this, the special international relationship that had hitherto existed in the areas mentioned earlier ceased to exist.

In 1970, the University of Benin was established; this brought to six, the number of the first set of universities in Nigeria. Between 1975 and 1980, seven additional universities were created by the then military administration. This second generation universities were: the University of Calabar, University of OJos, University of Ilorin, University of Maiduguri, University of Port-Harcourt, Uthman dan-Fodio University, Sokoto and Bayero University Kano (Ejiogu and Sule, 2012). As at present, September, 2017) Nigeria has a total number of 124 universities. Out of this number, 37 were solely established and owned by the various State government and 50 were established and owned by the private individuals and religious organisations. National Universities Commission (NUC) 2010. In spite of these high number of universities in Nigeria compared with other African or developing nations, the issue of access, quality and international standard remain the major challenge to university education in Nigeria. This paper therefore a critical look at the issue of international standards/internationalization from the perspectives of staff/students' mobility and inter-institutional collaboration, which the researcher believe is critical to enhancement of educational quality and the university system using the Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria as a case-study.

Niger Delta University Creation and Her Position in Internalization

Niger Delta University (NDU) is in Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State in Nigeria, is a Bayelsa State government funded university. It was established in 2000 by Chief DSP Alamieseigha, then governor of Bayelsa State. It has the main campuses, one in the State capital, Yenagoa, which contains the Law Faculty, and the other in Amassoma.

Niger Delta University has come a long way since its establishment and ranks among the 50 best universities in Nigeria. Its main campus in Amassoma is in temporary site, with work on the permanent site ongoing.

The university offers a unique opportunity for students to acquire qualitative education at Bachelor, Masters and Ph.D levels. It is a member of the Association of Commonwealth Universities. It is accredited and recognised by the National Universities Commission (NUC) of Nigeria.

The University has Nine Faculties

The establishment of the university through a law in 2000 was a significant turning-point in the education and socio-economic history Bayelsa State in particular and Nigeria in general. The university, which started academic activities in the 2001/2002 session, had its pioneer set of graduating students in the 2004/2005 academic year. Although, the student population was only 1,039 at inception, this increase to 4,636 in 2003/2004 and later 10,924 in 2006/2007.

The university maintains the quota provided by the National Universities Commission (NUC). There has been a significant increase in the number of academic and non-academic staff.

Campuses

The university is in Wilberforce Island, about 32km from the State capital Yenagoa and is made up of three campuses: Gloryland (Main campus). College of Health Sciences, and the temporary campus of the Faculty of Law. A new campus, which is an extension of the Gloryland campus is being developed.

Why Measure Internalization

As internalization becomes an increasingly important aspect of higher education and continues to move from the margins to the center of the academic enterprise, institutions need to judge not only the quantity of activity but also its quality and its contribution to overall institutional goals. Recent thinking in the field has moved the discussion away from internationalization as a goal unto itself. Rather, it is a means to an end, such as enhancing the quality of scholarship and discovery, alleviating poverty, or producing globally aware and competent graduates. There are many reasons to measure internationalization: as a component of overall institutional performance, to judge the effectiveness of an institutions internationalization strategy or its components, to benchmark with other institutions, and to improve internationalization programs and practices.

Improvement should be a key driver for any type of measurement and indeed, this paper focuses on this goal. As the following discussions outlines, when the major goal of measurement is improvement, the process involves a clear articulation of goals, careful choice of agreed-upon indicators, a sensible approach to selecting a relevant group and a manageable number of measures, development of an internationalization plan, and shared sense that the work will provide useful information as a basis for informed action.

As already noted, one cannot ignore the fact that internationalization has increasingly become an instrument of competition. The competitive environment requires institutions to differentiate themselves from the competition, and establish their brand or profile. Performance indicators such as graduation rates or having Nobel Prize winners on the faculty (depending on the institution) are concrete markers of success. In the internationalization arena, institutions commonly point to the number of international students, the number of international students, the number of education abroad programmes offered, or the proportion of students engaged in education abroad as indications of success. They may also choose to use indicators to benchmark their performance to that of peer institutions, either as a tool for quality improvement or to point out their comparative advantage. In an ideal world, increasing an institution's competitiveness or improving its brand is a by-product of quality improvement rather than a goal unto itself, and the following pages focus on this approach to internationalization.

Constraints to Internationalization of Niger Delta University

The following have been listed as constraints to internationalization of the Niger Delta University, (NDU), Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

1. The removal of government assistance in terms of funding has greatly affects the students and university management.
2. The effect of incessant closure of the university due to unpaid salaries and other political matters.
3. The problem of inadequate power supply where there is no solar resource made available to students and staff.
4. Communication linkage is a critical factor in the internationalization of Niger Delta University as that opens the institution to two larger audience and the wider world. There is therefore the need for the redesigning of the communication lines. E-University will play the magic transformal
5. waudfor prompt reach to foreigners and their various forms of educational programmes.

Conclusion

Internationalization of Niger Delta University is the process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service function of the university system. It is associated with enormous gains or benefits, some of which include: students and staff development; academic standards and quality, fostering of unity and cooperation among different universities, understanding of different cultures and languages; and international research collaboration among different universities etc. However, these gains do not come without a certain level of risk and are laden with challenges which must be overcome. Any successful internationalization can take place in the university system. Some of the pressing challenges include homogenization of international curriculum, poor funding and strikes. In fact without the establishment of international quality assurance standards, the entire internationalisation of university education might be in vain. Therefore, a common point of reference should be established in order to govern the internationalization process of Niger Delta University.

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Recommendation

Poor funding is seen as a problem with Niger Delta University. The government is therefore urged to step-up funding of the university.

Internationalization of Niger Delta University will expose students to online programme and other international opportunities. Internationalization of Niger Delta University will expand academic/research horizon of the institution.

Internationalization will foster human development through understanding and respect across nations.

It will bring about expansion and sustaining avenues for economic competitiveness.

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