

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH

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The concept of education is diversified depending on who proffers, where and for what purpose. In other words, education has no clear cut and precise definition. It is the people and their circumstances that give education its meaning at any point in time. Therefore, personal definitions such as education is power, education is knowledge transfer, knowledge acquisition, production of desired manpower, transformation of the individual and so on are all correct.

In the context of Nigerian education, the philosophy, aims and objectives, roles and functions, the need to address noticeable gaps in the curriculum contents and provisions emerging in the course of implementation, maintenance of currency, relevance, new opportunities, issues and challenges have been articulated in the various editions of the national policy on education – first in 1977; second in 1981; third in 1988; fourth in 2004; fifth in 2007 and the sixth edition in 2013 (FRN, 2013). The various editions indicate improvements upon the other in the consideration of education as an instrument for national development.

Education is a globalized element which emphasizes cross fertilization of ideas and practices within countries and institutions for adaptability to derive the full benefits individually and collectively at the local and international levels. The major issue therefore, is that of internationalization of education in our country Nigeria.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am doing this lead discourse under:

- 1) The Concept of Internationalization of Education in Nigeria.
- 2) The Need for Internationalization of Education in Nigeria.
- 3) Progressive Approaches to Internationalization of Education in Nigeria.
- 4) Policy Issues for Progressive Internationalization of Education in Nigeria.
- 5) Implications of Progressive Internationalization of Education in Nigeria.
- 6) Conclusion

[1] The Concept of Internationalization of Education in Nigeria: The concept of internationalization is not new. It had been in practice in the areas of Political Science and government relations for centuries. Its popularity in education soared since the early 1980s when the Japanese Government tried to improve upon their education to have international linkages considering it as a key factor to face the challenges of globalization.

Internationalization is a word amenable to multi-dimensional interpretations as a multi-vocal symbol. Many scholars have proffered various definitions at various periods.

(i) Varghese in (2008) defines it as the imparting of knowledge, skills and values which have universal appeal and application. By implication, the curriculum becomes cross-national and inter-cultural and nature.

(ii) Knight (2014), proffers it as an integration process of international and intercultural dimensions in the functions of teaching, research and institutional service delivery.

(iii) Vorkapic (2016) sees it as the preparation of people to function in an increasingly international culturally relevant and diverse environment.

If internationalization is influenced by globalization of economies, societies, increased importance of knowledge driven by dynamic, flexible and constantly developing synergies of political, economic, socio-cultural and academic justifications, then internationalization of education in Nigeria would mean a process of complementing, harmonizing and extending the education curriculum and practices beyond local to international dimensions, upholding the cross-cultural contents.

Internationalization indeed is a process of change directed toward meeting the individual and collective educational needs and interest. In effect, it means that internationalization is dynamic, with varying models and strategies since every country is unique and would want to develop its own approach to internationalization based on its principles, rationales, goals and the envisaged outcome.

Derived from the foregoing, there are various models of internationalization of education as identified by Uche and Ahunanya (2013) viz

- International Students Mobility.
- Faculty Exchange and Development.
- Research Collaboration.
- Foreign Language Study.
- Building of International Perspective.
- International Networking.
- Distance Education.
- Locally Supported Education
- Twinning Programmes.
- Articulation Programmes.
- Agreements and International Quality Assistance Systems.

The partial consideration of internationalization of education and as well as the models have the concomitant effects of intensified mobility of ideas, students and academics in Nigerian Universities leading to brain drain and capital flights, these are the twin diseases plaguing Nigeria academia.

Internationalization of education can be facilitated in Nigeria in such a way that students acquire international skills within the Nigerian academic environment. The focus would involve a shift from producing for the domestic environment to international job markets. The strategy would be the refocusing of courses offered in our universities to meet the demands of international market. This will be the homemade internationalization. It does not require the presence of foreign providers (Varghese, 2008).

The domesticated internationalization of education has the ease of management considering the cost and the benefits. It would deviate from the foreign conditions that influence the perception of space, mobility of actions, nature of communication and orientation to social interactions. The general focus of internationalization of education is on the international actions of individuals, groups and social institutions to cross national boundaries in pursuit of social, economic, political, cultural and other benefits.

(2) The Need For Internationalization Of Education In Nigeria: The development and application of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in all facets of life transforms the world into a global village. In this 21st century, the increasing level of globalization generally regarded as internationalization presents the need for mutual understating, encouragement of global research collaboration, cross fertilization of ideas, knowledge and best practices. With the foregoing, education services can be regarded as an export commodity and much sought for by its developmental roles in the society.

Many countries such as United States of America, Japan, Malaysia, Columbia, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, Poland, Romania and so on, recognize the importance of internationalization of their education. Their governments are reforming their education system to meet international perspectives. The universities are modifying their curriculum and administrative systems and style, to meet the demand of more globally minded graduates.

Nigeria as the African giant should become a centre of attraction of mutual international relations educationally as a major civilization instrument, need to be fully internationalized. It becomes imperative that Nigeria education be made internationally interconnected and interdependence of people and institutions, students mobility, synergistic networking and global awareness of the benefits of international exposure to international foreign languages and inter-cultural skills for participation in global setting.

Nigeria as a country should necessarily be upgraded status-wise in the comity of progressive nations. The first step is to double the emphasis, accord more recognition to the importance of internalizing education and of course implementing the process of internationalization with all commitment.

[3] Progressive Approaches to Internationalization of Education in Nigeria: There are four major perspectives to internationalization of education. The approaches are articulated and discussed as explained by Delgado-Marque, Hurtado-Tones and Bonder (2011) as follows:

(i) **Activity approach:** This approach is activity-based and it is the most prevalent in the incorporation of international dimension into educational activities and it determines how far the products of the system are accepted globally. The educational activities amenable to activity approach include:

- Curriculum development and exchanges.
- Faculty exchange
- Technical assistance
- Institutional linkages
- International students study abroad
- Networking
- Development projects assistance
- Extended campuses
- Academic mobility

The approach involves carrying out specific activities and programmes in form of series of distinct programmes. However, there as some instances of obstacles to internationalization. For instance the

rigorous process of admissions particularly into higher education in Nigeria through JAMB where a qualified candidate could take the exams four to five times does not augur well for internationalization. Foreign students will not be encouraged because of the rigours.

Notably, other West African Countries like Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone do not have strings attached to their admission processes. Once a candidate qualifies with the Regional West African Examinations Council Certificate Examinations, entry into tertiary education is guaranteed. This process favour internationalization of education. It is necessary to harmonize and standardize educational criteria taking cognizance of international demands. Where that is done, then the activity approach to internationalization of education in Nigeria would be well applied

(ii) Competency approach: Competency has to do with skills performance, proficiency and efficiency and focuses on outcomes, values and attitude. It involves the generation and transfer of knowledge toward the development and acquisition of competencies for the individual to be internationally adaptable in terms of knowledge and skills as well as in inter-cultural skill.

Competency-based education and training is an approach to teaching and learning as educational processes of learning concrete skills. It adopts the modular/single unit of instructions for every individual skills and learning outcome. Learners work on one competency at a time.

Competency approach adapts to the development of new skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in students, faculty and staff. As emphasis on educational outcome grows; there is increasing interest in identifying and defining global international competencies. The emphasis is on the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values of importance for competition in the global job market.

Competency approach, if at all emphasized in Nigerian education is partial and the education practices are more theoretically based, thereby doubting the marketability of Nigerian graduates in international scenes.

Buttressing the foregoing, the vision 20:2020 document of the Federal Government of Nigeria (2010) noted the declining quality of education, training and skills acquired as posing serious impediments to employability of Nigerian graduates at the international level thereby undermining the competitiveness of the prepared and produced labour force into the local and international job markets by indigenous institutions.

It was also noted that underfunding, poor and inadequate infrastructures, poor incentives, non-consideration of education as a primary development element, theoretical instructions in the sciences and inadequacy of library resources has resulted in overstretching of the available classrooms, hostels and other space in higher institutions – how would internationalization work under such circumstances. At the Basic and Post-Basic education levels, the curriculum are more or less indigenized, developed based on local needs assessments. There is therefore the need for upgrading into internationally collaborative education for best-practices and assured quality product who can proceed for further studies easily beyond the shores of Nigeria.

(iii) Ethos approach: Ethos explains the characteristic spirit of a culture, era or community as manifested in its attitude and aspirations. It could mean a set of beliefs ideas about the social behavior and relationships of a person or group e.g. the working class-ethos. As an internationalization approach to education, it focuses on establishing an atmosphere, beliefs and distinguished character that encourage and foster the development of international and inter-cultural values and initiatives. It

is an attempt, as explained by Ahunanya and Igot (2013), to make more explicit the culture of the institution an international dimension to the delivery of education services.

The ethos approach for now hardly apply to Nigeria education since the required academic atmosphere is yet to be achieved to encourage full nationalization so much more internationalization. The universities experience intra and inter cultural conflicts and crises due to the government not meeting up its financial obligations. There is the absence of motivations that encourage mentoring and capacity building among staff. University lecturers stress themselves to attend conferences locally and internationally due to paucity of sponsorship. A clear case in point is the unwritten policy of indigenization in appointments into academic positions without non-indigenes. Such situations discourage internationalization.

(iv) **The process approach:** Process describes a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular goal. It explains the procedure, operation, action, activity, exercise, affair, business, task and undertaking to achieve a purpose.

The process approach to internationalization of education focuses on policies and procedures put in place to encourage internationalization. It is an integration of an international and inter-cultural dimension into academic programmes at all levels of education as well as the guiding policies and procedures of an institution.

It is concerned with the international process that forms part of instructional deliveries, research and services to the community at the tertiary education level. Currently, the existence of online services allows for online courses by some institutions. In Nigeria, The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is on the process but yet to be fully actualized. The situation is probably associated with technology adaptation problem, power failure, inadequacy of ICT skills by both staff and students. The situation is applicable generally in the Nigerian education. It is of note that most researches by postgraduate students of Nigerian Universities fall below the international rating and therefore require the reviewing the entire system of research activities to meet international standards.

On the whole, there is hope for Nigeria as a developing country, with knowledge expansion, cross fertilization of ideas across borders, ICT development and utilization in education, research networking in support of progressive internationalization of education and could be fully realized. Of course, the country will be away from the status of academic Lilliputs.

[4] Policy Issues for Progressive Internationalization of Education in Nigeria

Policy describes a principle of action that serves as operational guide for an individual or an organization. For progressive internationalization of education in Nigeria to be realized, clearly defined and precise policies should be put in place to ensure steady progression toward holistic internationalization of education. There are a number of policy issues, which, if tackled then the progressive internationalization of education is realizable. They include:

(i) **The issue of access to education:** There is need for unhindered access to education generally by putting in place flexible policy for potential students to have access to education particularly into higher education with consideration for students across international boundaries. The current central admission test through Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) should be scrapped and institutions allowed to conduct their individual admission exercises with their criteria giving consideration to students across international boundaries. The universities conducting post-Jamb

screening calls for questioning as to the relevance of JAMB examination with inconsistent cut of marks. Individual Universities setting their standards for admission could form a part of the indices for rating internationally.

(ii) Issue of quality assurance: The forecasting is that by 2025, the demand for international education will indicate a quantum leap from 1.2 million students in 2000 to 7.2 million students. It therefore means that there will be influx of new providers delivering programmes to students in their home countries. Quality of services and delivery becomes the issue. It is no longer just students, faculty and researches that are internationally mobile, academic programmes are being provided across boarder and new campuses and institutions are being established in developing and developed countries around the world.

The quality assurance issues therefore include:

- The quality of academic offers.
- The integrity of the new academic service providers.
- The international recognition of credentials earned.
- Increase in the number of foreign degree mills (selling of Doctoral degrees by unaccredited institutions, churches etc).
- Increase in the number of accreditation agencies.
- Increase in the number of profit providers (not recognized national authorities)
- Increase in the number of unaccredited and unlicensed universities in Nigeria. That is the non-regulated “fly by night” institutions.
- Balancing of cost, quality and access challenges in terms of benefiting cross boarder students.
- The quality of curriculum implemented in relation to contemporary international demands.

These quality issues constitute the realities that face students, the parents, employers both local and international and the academic community and must be looked into urgently to ensure quality for progressive internationalization of education in Nigeria.

(iii) The issue of funding: Funding and financing are key elements in quality educational provisions. Funds in cash support the provision of academic infrastructure of international standards, attraction, retention and remuneration for academic and non-academic staff in the institutions. Paucity of funds has remained the bane of Nigerian education system particularly the public Institutions. The effect therefore is poor infrastructure, decay of existing facilities, difficulties of maintenance of existing structures, non-motivation of staff of their financial due thereby affecting performance. The no-fund syndrome is now the common language of management of institutions. A clear and non- politicized policy on funding of education in Nigeria is long overdue.

(iv) Issue of consistent academic calendar: The general observation is the frequent interruptions of academic calendar of most public schools in Nigeria particularly the Universities due to strikes by the various unions in the institutions. It is as a result of imbalance between the expectations of members of the unions and the government which have always resulted in conflicts. Of course, the negative effect will be the problem of internationalizing our education. The government should live up to its obligations to ensure steady academic calendars.

(v) **The issue of security in Nigeria schools:** Recently, insecurity in Nigerian schools had been a major challenge and a serious hindrance to internationalization of education. Students have been kidnapped for ransom. The Chibok girls' episode was the result of insecurity. Cultism is developing and multiplying extending their activities to schools leading to loss of lives, properties and stoppage of academic activities. In the higher institutions in Nigeria, cultism clashes, kidnapping of staff and what have you discourages both indigenous and foreign students thereby limiting the progressive process of internationalization of education.

[5] Implications of Progressive Internationalization of Education in Nigeria

The implications of progressive internationalization of education in Nigeria is to the extent of the process ensuring the complementing, harmonizing and extending of our education services to international dimensions integrating curriculum demands and cross-cultural tenets. Progressive internationalization will ensure the practice of free and unhindered access to education by desiring students irrespective of national boundaries. The issue of clearly articulated education internationalization operational policy will be put in place to ensure holistic and steady progression toward internationalization. The clear cut policy on internationalization would lay to rest the problem of underfunding of education, unaccountability of allocated funds, insecurity in the school system, and unhindered internationalization would engender the progressive internationalization of education. Review of institutional structures, academic programmes and facilities particularly in the Nigerian higher institutions to meet international demands will ensue. The elements of quality assurance in the process would have been ensured in terms of academic offers, the integrity of new academic service providers; international recognition of credentials earned; balancing of cost, quality and access to education to cross border students. The full spirit of internationalization of education will be achieved.

The quality of curriculum would be streamlined based on contemporary international demands. This will definitely ensure global best practices thereby producing internationally competitive graduates in knowledge, skills, adaptability and easily adjustable to job market requirements.

Conclusion

Internationalization of education is practicable in Nigeria but should be progressively approached with well articulated and clearly defined policies for progressive implementation.

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