

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

Comfort Remilekun Olorunyomi

Abstract

Primary education has now become a real part of the globalization process: in today's changing world, the idea of internationalization of primary education especially in developing countries has been deduced from globalization of education process. The international aspect of primary education is becoming increasingly important, composite and confusing. Consequently, primary education can no longer be viewed in a strictly national context. This calls for a broader definition of internationalization, which embraces the entire functioning of primary education and not merely a dimension or aspect of it, or the action of some individuals who are part of it. The primary education has an effect on the society through policy making, funding and planning. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the meaning, definition of internationalization of primary education. This paper also studies the programs and strategies of internationalization of primary education. Key challenges for the future directions of internationalization are identified in this paper. Conclusion and recommendations was proffered.

Keywords: Internationalization, Primary Education, Challenges and Strategies

The lack of necessary specialties such as poor-education, low-consciences, sciences and technologies are extremely important problems in today's societies. The high percentage of societies' population, especially poor societies, does not have access to education. So, it is necessary for states to plan for education development, consciousness-raising and technical as well as professional skills development (Etaat, 1999; Mahmoodi, 1993; Zolfaghari, 2003). Due to the significant role of primary education in current societies, primary education came to serve the administrative and economic interests of the governments and became a necessary dimension of the development.

The primary education systems in Nigeria have presented a propensity for internationalization. In this direction, primary education has become more international and subject to national culture and government (Marginson, 2006). The new issues facing primary education, both nationally and internationally, are introducing changes, demonstrating new tendencies and displaying different challenges. As Knight (1999) stated "Today, internationalization of primary education is not limited to a geographical interpretation of the concept". Internationalization is part of the basic education effort to fulfill their primary functions, namely, the teaching and learning process, research and scholarly activities, and service to society.

Concept of Primary Education

Primary education refers to the first stage of the total processes of developing human ability and behaviour. It is the first stage of the social process in which one achieves social acceptance and

individual growth, through a selected, controlled setting which is institutionalized; it forms the foundation for other levels and types of education in any national educational system, as the rest of the educational system is built upon it. The primary education is the key to the success or failure of the whole educational system (National Policy on Education, 2004). The primary education is of the foundation of education system in any nation and an effective tool in promoting national development. Standard primary education is the level of excellence, and issue profitability primary education is aimed at. It is also a level against which primary education may be judged. If at all there should be efficiency and effectiveness in been primary school education, it must be adequately funded.

Concept of Internationalization

The term “internationalization” covers different things, and includes different dimensions, with varied stresses at different levels of primary education (Yang, 2002). The definition of internationalization of primary education varies and depends on the stakeholder groups, government, private sector, institution, faculty member, academic discipline, and student.

Internationalization is the process of planning and implementing products and services so that they can easily be adapted to specific local languages and cultures, a process called localization.

In education, internationalization is the preparation of people to function in an increasingly international and culturally relevant and diverse environment (Mamrick, 1999). The integration process of international and intercultural dimensions that are in the function of teaching, researching and institutional service delivering.

Internationalization of Primary Education

The definition of internationalization of primary education varies and depends on the stakeholder groups, government, private sector, institution, faculty member, academic discipline, and student. These differing perspectives result in several reasons for many program approaches to internationalization of primary education (Trilokekar, 2007).

Internalization of primary education is seen as one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization, while at the same time respecting the individuality of the nation. While the various meanings attached to the term internationalization illustrate its complexity and richness as a concept, it is clear that the key element in the term is the notion of between or among nations and cultural identities. A country’s unique history, indigenous culture(s) resources, priorities etc shape its response to aid relationships with other countries. Thus, national identity and culture are key to internationalization of primary education.

Knight (1993) describes internationalization of primary education as the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, learning and service functions of the institution. There are several key concepts in this definition, e.g. the idea of internationalization being a dynamic process and not a set of isolated activity, integration or infusion that contributes to the sustainability of the international dimension. This definition refers to the primary and universal functions of an institution of primary, namely teaching and research and service to society. However, some scholars argue that in this definition, no further goal of the process of internationalization is indicated. This could suggest that internationalization is an aim itself, while in many countries and settings, it is rather seen as a means to achieve a wider goals e.g. quality improvement, restructuring and upgrading of primary school systems and services (Van der Wende, 1997). Van der Wende

attempts to include in the definition any systematic, sustained efforts aimed at making education responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labour markets. Hence, internationalization is not merely an aim itself, but an important resource in the development of primary education towards, first of all, a system in line with international standard, secondly, one open and responsive to its global environment.

The Importance of Internationalization in Primary Education

The two most important benefits identified by primary education are more internationally oriented staff/students and improved academic quality. The three least-important benefits according to these same institutions are national and international citizenship, revenue generation, and brain gain. To some, it may seem hard to believe that revenue generation is seen as such a low-priority benefit (and rationale). One might ask whether this was a “socially desirable response” on the part of the responding primary institution.

Little evidence exists at this time that internationalization is seen primarily as a profit-making enterprise for the majority of educational institutions around the world. While internationalization is a top priority for some institutions, this policy perspective is limited to probably 8 or 10 out of the 95 countries.

Again, there are noteworthy differences among regions in terms of perceived benefits. Of interest is the high priority given to academic quality in both Africa and Latin America. The benefit to foster national and international citizenship is generally seen to be of low importance, but more institutions in North America see it as an important benefit than in any other region of the world. Revenue generation also has an overall low ranking, but more universities in Asia Pacific see it as both an important rationale and benefit. Brain gain ranks lowest for the majority of the regions, except the Middle East.

The top three importance of internationalization to primary education at both local and global level in order of relevance were: increasing international awareness of pupils; strengthening research and knowledge production; and fostering international cooperation and solidarity.

Problems of Internationalization of Primary Education

Internationalization of primary education is especially important today and cannot be overemphasized. Recent developments around the world are putting education at odds with emerging nationalist, xenophobic and intolerant thinking and policies in many countries. Schools that have prided themselves on working across borders of country and culture now find themselves dealing with governments which are campaigning to keep out foreigners.

These developments threaten the fundamental values of education generally primary education inclusive – multiculturalism, international collaboration, free flow of people and ideas, and broadly liberal social values. But, most of all, they threaten education’s paramount value of the pursuit of truth.

These events highlight another challenge. As primary education nowadays collaborate with peers internationally and pursue international reputation and status, evidence from the US and UK suggest that primary education may be leaving their local communities behind. Pursuit of “world-classness” is driving a schism between local/national and global responsibilities and priorities.

Student mobility has been the most visible part of internationalization, but not all students are willing or able to spend time abroad. Strengthening and embedding internationalisation “at home” and

“on campus” is therefore more vital than ever. This means building and establishing authentic links between the institution and its many publics, and making internationalization real and meaningful for wider society.

Strategies for Internationalizing

The strategies are applied to describe the activities done by a educational institutions to integrate a global aspect into research, teaching, service functions, management policies and systems. Thus, internationalization needs a suitable and operational strategy. The University of Tokyo specified five strategies for the internalization of educational institutions – primary education inclusive (The University of Tokyo, 2005). These strategies are global in nature, and may be operational to other educational stages to complete their plans. In these strategies, individuals at all levels must effectively play their roles and duties. In summary, the five strategies are:

- (1) Provision of an internationally high standard of education;
- (2) Enhancement of research activities through strengthening international research networks
- (3) Promoting cooperation with international society;
- (4) Improvement of infrastructure to promote “internal internationalization”;
- (5) Formulation of a long-term internationalization plan (The University of Tokyo, 2005).

In addition to these strategies, it is important to note that internationalization of primary education emphasizes on active participation in educational programs, research activities, educational reforms, challenges, opportunities and consequences of international and national changes in primary education (Henry, Lingard, Rizvi & Taylor, 2001). It seems that the most important point of view in internationalization of primary education is the participation in the different educational and research programs. Internationalization with this important specification basically prevents from unification and omission of experiences and regional favors. Internationalization also emphasizes on cooperation, instead of unification. A realization of this important viewpoint is necessary to plan and implement essential programs for internationalization (Henry, Lingard, Rizvi & Taylor, 2001). So, the most important strategies of internationalization of primary education originated from global experience are as follows:

- (1) Revision of textbooks and representation of courses which correspond to the content of global community knowledge and international problems;
- (2) Development of humanistic resources for the realization of social, economic, cultural consequences of internationalization;
- (3) Use of the comparative studies to present the content of existing educational programs;
- (4) Emphasis on inter-cultural skills for planning in primary education;
- (5) Acquaint pupils with abilities and skills in the international arena;
- (6) The planning of special textbooks for foreign students;
- (7) Exchange experiences among educational institutions;
- (8) Enrichment of primary school environments for educational and research activities according to the global standards;
- (9) The planning of educational programs according to the time needed through regional and international cooperation;

- (10) Preparation of facilities for scientific boards to use new technologies;
- (11) Preparation of public information to save time and spend the existing capitals in other sectors in primary education;
- (12) Necessary preparation at the managerial level to develop an international primary education;

Conclusion

Differentiating between academic and organizational elements is essential. By only focusing on the academic or program activities one can overlook the process issues, which are important to ensure that the different activities central to the mission of the institution. Internationalization must be entrenched in the culture, policy planning and organizational process of the institution so that it can be both successful and sustainable.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented to promote the quality of primary education among countries.

- (1) Attention to strategic planning to primary education management;
- (2) Revision of textbooks and preparation of educational periods according to society's needs;
- (3) Attitude change of scientific boards to use new technologies;
- (4) Renewal of primary education manpower;
- (5) Attention to English language as the international language;
- (6) Digitization of libraries and references with emphasis on preparation of informatics databases;
- (7) Use of new technologies to generate information and scientific stagnations of the world;
- (8) Standardization of educational programs to generate knowledge.
- (9) Lack of monopoly of period's possession, textbooks and educational programs;
- (10) Study of global markets of primary education for establishing conditions and suitable environment for accepting foreign students, execution of common projects, exchange of experiences and educational, scientific innovations.

References

- Etaat, J. (1999). Education and development. *Economic and Political Information*, 143-144(13), 208-225.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Henry, P., Lingard, T., Rizvi, H. & Taylor, R. (2001). *Transnational higher education & faculty unions: Issues for discussion & action*. Paper presented at the International Conference on International Higher Education.

- Knight, J. & International Association of Universities. (2006). Internationalization of higher education: New directions, new challenges. *2005 IAU Global Survey Report*. Paris: International Association of Universities.
- Knight, J. (1993). Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches and rationales. *Studies in International Education*, 5-31.
- Knight, J. (1999). Issues and trends in internationalization: A comparative perspective. In: S. Bond, J. P. Lemasson & International Development Research Centre (Canada). (Eds.). *A new world of knowledge: Canadian universities and globalization*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, xii, 294.
- Mahmoodi, V. (1993). Education for development. *Economic and Political Information*, 79-80(8), 111-113.
- Mamrick, R. (1999). Policy responses to global transformation by African higher education systems. In: T. Zeleza, A. O. Olukoshi & Codesria. (Eds.). *African universities in the twenty-first century (Vol.1)*. Dakar, Senegal; Oxford, UK: Codesria; Distributed elsewhere by African Books Collective, 21-41.
- Marginson, S. (2006). Notes on globalization and higher education with some reference to the case of Australia. Paper presented at the York Conference on Internationalizing Canada's Universities: Practices, Challenges and Opportunities: A Symposium. Retrieved from <http://www.yorku.ca/yorkint/global/conference/canada/papers/SimonMarginson.pdf>.
- The University of Tokyo. (2005). *The University of Tokyo internationalization promotion plan 2005-2008*. Retrieved Oct. 1, 2008, from <http://dir.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/ut/suishinkeikaku-e.pdf>.
- Trilokekar, R. D. (2007). *Federalism, foreign policy and the internationalization of higher education: A case study of the International Academic Relations Division*, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada. University of Toronto, Toronto.
- Van der Wende, (1997). *Internationalization of higher education in the United States of America and Europe: A historical, comparative, and conceptual analysis*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Yang R. (2002). *Third delight: The internationalization of higher education in China*. New York London: Routledge.
- Zolfaghari, A. (2003). *The role of education in social development*. Open University, Shahreza.