

CROSS-BORDER EDUCATION AND ONLINE EDUCATION: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

All societies, beginning from ancient times to contemporary times, are knowledge societies although there is a progression in the field of science and technology, civil society and social institutions with the passage of time. The knowledge economy occupies a central position in the 21st century, and as a result of this, higher education has assumed unprecedented importance within nations and also in international circles largely as a result of the indispensable role it plays in educating people for the new economy and in creating new knowledge. The emergence of the knowledge economy and the resultant demand for skills have compelled an expansion of higher education in all countries, encouraged skill migration from developing to developed countries, and ultimately promoted cross-border education. This paper discusses cross-border education within the ambits of internationalisation and globalisation, and goes further to situate higher education across borders as a tradable service covered within the scope of the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS). Nigeria has a long history of internationalization of higher education dating back to pre-independence era when many of the nationalists studied overseas. Under globalization, cross-border higher education has undergone a major transformation due largely to technologically sophisticated methods of delivery and a dominant profit-driven motive. This has led to the emergence of new forms of programme delivery such as branch campuses, franchises and distance education. The open and distance-learning systems have widened the scope for expanding higher education. Some inadvertent issues of cross-border education in Nigeria addressed in this paper include the internationalisation of academic relations; widening the gap created by inequality; cultural diversity; acculturation and capacity building; and brain drain/gain. Finally, some challenges which have punctured the capacity of Nigerian universities in competing favourably for the influx of foreign academics and students were examined with workable recommendations offered.

Introduction

It can be strongly argued that all societies are knowledge societies. A cursory look at ancient times suggests that in primeval hunting and gathering societies, people needed knowledge of their natural environment, knowledge to find food, knowledge to make tools, knowledge about the behaviour of other people. This knowledge enhanced the adaptability and control of the environment by those who lived in it. However, the breath-taking advancements recorded in the field of science and technology, civil society and social institutions in recent times have made our present society more knowledge-intensive and complex. The knowledge economy occupies a central position in the 21st century, and as a result of this, higher education has assumed unprecedented importance within nations and also in international circles largely as a result of the indispensable role it plays in educating people for the new economy and in creating new knowledge.

The emergence of the knowledge economy and the resultant demand for skills have necessitated an expansion of higher education in all countries, encouraged skill migration from developing to developed countries, and promoted cross-border education (Varghese, 2011). Higher education is more critical than ever in determining a country's economic development and standards of living. Porter (1990) argued that a nation's ability to compete in the global economic marketplace was based on what a nation was able to create, not on what it inherited in terms of natural resources. This is a true description of the Nigerian situation where the vast abundance of natural resources is confronted by poor development. Knowledge and innovation are progressively important to the economic competitiveness of a nation. It is not surprising therefore that most of the world's strongest economies are possessed by nations that have long valued and invested in all levels of higher education. Higher education increasingly serves as an important supporter of a nation's ability to compete economically, through the production of an educated workforce, development of commercially viable innovations, and playing other roles critical for supporting business and industry that engage in international trade. Thus, higher education can no longer be discussed in strictly national context but borders on internationalisation which is an embodiment of the whole operation of higher education.

Knowledge economies thrive on research and production, and so, would require people with theoretical knowledge to promote research activities, with professional skills to develop production, and with technical skills to produce and support production. These skills correspond to a level of education imparted in universities and institutions of higher education. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2004) estimated that, in some

knowledge economies, nearly 70 per cent of all new jobs require a post-secondary level of education.

There is much discussion and debate over the controversial trends or “-isations” of higher education (Knight, 2004). These are commercialisation (trading, that is, buying and selling including commodification), privatisation (private ownership and/or funding), marketisation (dominion of market forces, that is, allowing the market to determine supply and demand), liberalisation (the removal of trade barriers). Two additional controversial trends include internationalisation and globalization. This paper shall focus majorly on these last two in an attempt to situate cross-border education as well as open and distance learning within the ambits of internationalisation and globalization. The discourse shall then proceed to dwell on some unintended issues arising from the advent of cross-border education together with some challenges posed by cross-border education to the Nigerian education system followed by some recommendations towards mitigating these challenges.

Internationalisation and globalisation of higher education

Internationalization is a multifaceted process that is integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension into the purpose, goals, functions and delivery of higher education. One of the key elements of internationalization is academic mobility/cross-border education. This is made possible through international cooperation and development projects; mobility of academics through exchange, field work, sabbaticals and consultancy work; recruitment of international students institutional agreements and networks; the international/intercultural dimension of the teaching/learning process, curriculum and research; campus-based extracurricular clubs and activities; student exchange programs and semesters abroad; joint/double degree programs; twinning partnerships; and branch campuses. Thus, internationalization can also occur in such a way that students acquire international skills without having to leave the country.

It is a truism that academic mobility across borders has been a central feature of higher education for centuries. However, the push factors in Nigeria which give rise to student mobility are rather unique. A critical factor is the issue of equitable access to higher education because many qualified candidates seeking admission are often not admitted due to the limited capacity of Nigerian universities to absorb this teeming populace. In addition, there is an unhealthy preference of qualifications obtained from foreign institutions which has gained a stronghold in our national consciousness. Taking this a step further, it is pertinent to observe that there is an underlying notion of universality in the conception of the term university, and this lends

credence to the existence of international dimension of such institutions as citadels of higher education and research. The trinity of the functions of teaching, research and service to society has traditionally guided the evolution of universities and their contribution to the social, cultural, human, scientific and economic development of a nation. A potential issue of contention would be whether or not this trinity should be unbundled in the consideration of which institution would qualify to be called a university.

The providers of higher education are generally classified into two categories namely:

- i. The traditional higher education institutions which are normally oriented to teaching, research and service/commitment to society. These include public non-profit, private non-profit and private for-profit institutions.
- ii. The 'new or alternative providers' such as virtual universities, branch campuses in other countries and corporate universities, who primarily focus on teaching and the delivery of education services, usually on a commercial basis, that is, for financial gain. They are more oriented towards delivering education and training programmes than undertaking research and scholarly activities. Here, we see the unbundling of the functions of the university. This group operates outside the regulatory ambit of the national higher education licensing and quality-assurance agency. Examples of such providers include APTECH Ltd, NIIT.

New or alternative providers are creating a new paradigm of higher education largely as a response to new demand, but also as a way of taking advantage of technological developments. So while there is a general agreement on the need for greater student access, there remains concern that increased access will only be available to those who can afford it, and only the economically elite can benefit from it. Thus, the critical issue of equity of access comes up.

Globalization, on the other hand, is a process that is increasing the flow of people, culture, ideas, values, knowledge, technology, and economy across borders, resulting in a more interconnected and interdependent world (Knight, 2006). Education is one of the sectors impacted by globalization. The higher education sector not only supported globalization, but also became globalized in the process (Varghese, 2011). The cross-border mobility of institutions, programmes, students, and teachers have ultimately contributed to globalizing higher education. The private sector, cross-border providers, and technology-based modes of delivery have changed the landscape of higher education and

made it a marketable service across countries. Globalisation covers the broad economic, technological, cultural and scientific trends that directly affect higher education. These trends are, for the most part, unavoidable. For example, there is the increasing popularity and acceptance of the use of a common language for scientific communication, which in most cases, is the English Language. Also, the growing use of ICT, that is, Information and Communications Technology (in its various manifestations) in the academia is worth mentioning. ICT and globalisation go hand in hand. Indeed, the internet serves as the primary vehicle for the globalisation of knowledge and communications. Globalisation cannot be completely avoided. History shows that when universities shut themselves off from economic and societal trends they become moribund and irrelevant like European universities, for example, which ignored both the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution and ceased to be relevant then (Altbach, 2004).

Nigeria has a long history of internationalization of higher education dating back to pre-independence era. The pioneer group of students travelled to the United States of America, United Kingdom, and Russia. Many of the nationalists studied overseas. This was largely due to the paucity of skilled human resources needed at independence as the conservative nature of the colonialists, as expressed in their educational policies, was geared towards the discouragement of critical thinking among the colonised (NOUN, 2006). In Nigeria, the University of Ibadan originated in 1948 as a college of the University of London during the British colonial rule. During the colonial period, universities in the land of the colonial masters frequently set up branch institutions or sponsored new schools in the colonies. Some examples include the ones set up by the British in Africa and Asia.

Knight (2007a) expresses the relationship between internationalisation and globalization as follows, “internationalization is transforming the world of higher education and globalization is changing the world of internationalization.” Internationalization tends to address the increase in border crossing activities amidst national systems of education. Globalization, on the other hand, assumes that borders and national systems do not exist (Varghese, 2008). Internationalisation includes specific policies and programmes undertaken by governments, academic systems and institutions, and even individual departments or institutions to cope with or exploit globalisation (Altbach, 2004). Cross-border education can be described as a subset of internationalisation of higher education.

Cross-border education in Nigeria

Cross-border education is only one part of the complex process of internationalization. Cross-border education is described by Knight (2007c) as the movement of people, knowledge, programs, providers and curriculum across national or regional jurisdictional borders. A more encompassing view would construe cross-border education as a term used to capture a wide range of education activities that are part of international academic linkages and agreements, international development/aid projects and international commercial trade initiatives (Knight, 2004). Academic mobility and education exchange across borders, that is, the mobility of students, professors, knowledge and even values has been part of higher education for centuries, but it has recently grown at an extraordinary pace which unfolds new opportunities such as improved access to higher education, strategic alliances between countries and regions, as well as the expansion of human resource and institutional capacity to meet the ever-growing demand for higher education.

Cross-border higher education has become a fascinating but very complex phenomenon. Globally, there have been three major phases of cross-border higher education, namely, the first generation, second generation and third generation (Knight, 2012) though Nigeria is yet to position itself properly in the third phase. The first generation (people mobility) was marked by student and scholar mobility has been occurring for as long as universities have been in existence. In fact, the concept of universe in the term 'university' is proof of the global dimension. In the second generation (programme and provider mobility) of cross-border education, programmes and providers are mobile, not the student. Franchise, twinning, double/joint degrees and various articulation models are examples of means by which programme and provider mobility have spread. The third generation (education hubs) is marked by education hubs build on and can include first and second generation cross-border activities, but they represent a wider and more strategic configuration of actors and activities. The concept of a national education hub rests on the assumption that it is a country's plan and effort to position itself within the region and beyond as a reputed centre for higher education and research.

About three decades ago, there was a growing interest in the prospect of expanding the import/export of education services which resulted in the subjection of the internationalisation of higher education (of which cross-border education is a part) to international trade rules. This brought about the need to define the terms of trade in education as a tradable service under the auspices of the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) which is administered by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The GATS is the first-

ever set of multilateral rules covering international trade in services. Hitherto, international trade agreements covered trade in products, but never services. This further fuels the debate as to whether education is a public good or private commodity. Should education still be considered to be a public good in the sense of contributing to the development of the knowledge society or should it be regarded as more of a private good for consumption by individuals? Others argue that, if higher education is to fulfil its role as a 'public good', then it will need to move away from its traditional public funding sources in favour of more market-based approaches which will ultimately be to the disadvantage of less developed societies. The argument that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility promotes the traditional values of higher education, and it is premised on the notion that access to higher education should be according to merit being a basic human right. However, Knight (2007b) argues that the GATS upholds, as a starting point, the notion that in terms of international trade law, education is already seen as a tradable service and not a commodity. The primary and secondary education sectors have been almost silent on the implications of GATS. GATS defines four ways in which a service can be traded. These are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Four modes of supply

GATS Mode of Supply	Explanation	Examples in Higher Education	Size/Potential of Market
Cross Border Supply	Providing a service which crosses a border. Does not require the consumer's physical movement.	Distance education, E-learning.	Currently a relatively small market. Seen as having great potential through the use of new ICTs, especially the Internet.
Consumption Abroad	Providing a service involving the consumer's movement to the supplier's country.	Students who go to another country to study.	Currently represents the largest share of the global market for education services.
Commercial Presence	The service provider establishes or has commercial facilities in another country to render the service	Local branch or satellite campuses. Twinning partnerships. Franchising arrangements with	Growing interest and strong potential for future growth. Most controversial, as it appears to set international rules on

		local institutions.	foreign investment.
Presence of Natural Persons	Persons travelling to another country temporarily to provide service.	Professors, teachers, researchers working abroad.	Potentially a strong market, given the emphasis on mobility of professionals.

Source: Knight (2002)

Of the four modes, cross-border supply and consumption abroad are the least restricted, both in terms of market access and national treatment. Cross-border supply thrives on the attraction of local students studying for an overseas qualification at a lower cost and without having to leave their home country. The attraction of a more flexible mode of study offered by cross-border programmes, for example, part-time, distance learning, fast track mode of study. The presence of natural persons pertains to the growing number of academics who “fly in” and deliver guest lectures or perform other services outside their home country. Academics also travel abroad temporarily for research or teaching although there is a substantial migration abroad for academic work as well. Most visiting scholars return home after their sojourns outside their home country, although a certain number of them capitalise on their assignments abroad as triggers to permanent emigration. A much larger number of academics migrate in order to take jobs in other countries. Globalisation fuels these flows. Academics will take jobs in countries with more attractive opportunities, salaries and working conditions. Some other factors that give room for migration of academics are the limited extent of academic freedom in many developing countries means that academics are sometimes subject to restrictions and even arrest if they stray from officially approved themes. Favouritism or even corruption in academic appointments, promotions and other areas further erode the conduciveness of the university environment. As academic systems become more similar and academic degrees more widely accepted internationally, as immigration rules are tailored to people with high skill levels, and as universities themselves become more open to hiring the best talent worldwide, the global marketplace will continue to expand. The migration of academic talent is in many ways promoted by the industrialised countries, which have much to gain as immigration policies are in some cases designed to encourage talented personnel to migrate and establish residency (Altbach, 2004).

Some organizations involved in cross-border education include the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Institute

of International Education (IED), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), World Bank International Development Association, Academy for Educational Development, Society for International Development and the Institute of International Education.

Educators usually interpret 'trade in education services' as a subset of cross-border education; for the most part, it is described as those activities which have a commercial or for-profit nature or purpose to them (Knight, 2004). Trade issues are closely related to the larger issues of commercialisation and commodification of cross-border education. Under globalization cross-border higher education has undergone a major transformation largely due to technologically sophisticated methods of delivery and a dominant profit-driven motive. This has led to the emergence of new forms of programme delivery such as branch campuses, franchises and distance education.

The open and distance-learning systems have widened the scope for expanding higher education. An interesting feature of open and distance-learning systems is that technological advances and their availability have provided opportunities for people to follow programmes of study and courses at their own pace. This is a particularly important mode for expanding higher education in small states. Higher education through this mode is less expensive than the face-to-face mode on the part of the state but not usually so on the part of the students. The major challenge in developing nations will be to ensure the availability of the technology to people who would like to pursue higher education through this mode not just those who can afford it. A stumbling block in Nigeria like many developing nations, is the absence of constant or uninterrupted power supply and the inability to meet up with standard information and communication technologies in education, and this pertains to Open Educational Resources (OER).

Potential benefits of OER include increased access to higher and continuing education, a greater diversity in programme offer, reduction in brain drain of bright students to foreign institutions, and exposure of local students and institutions to foreign teaching and education management systems. A number of challenges must be overcome to seize the full potential of OER for all educational sectors. From a technological perspective, accessibility, interoperability, reusability, quality and applicability need to be further improved. While standards exist that are meant to facilitate storage, search and retrieval of OER, further technological and legal solutions need to be developed so as to improve access; identify and retrieve relevant resources; and increase opportunities for sharing, reuse, adaptation and knowledge exchange.

Unintended issues of cross-border education in Nigeria

The exponential growth in the mobility of students, programmes and providers across borders brings us new opportunities to increase access to higher education, yet this phenomenon also introduces new risks. Let us examine some unintended issues arising from cross-border education together with open and distance education in Nigeria.

1. The Internationalisation of Academic Relations: Higher education institutions are actively expanding the international dimension of their research, teaching and service functions. The increasing interdependency among nations in confronting global issues such as climate change, crime, terrorism and health through collaborative research and scholarly activity has made this expansion a necessity. Another perspective to the necessity of internalization of academic relations is that it is now more desirable for graduates to be internationally knowledgeable and inter-culturally skilled so that they can live, work and function in more culturally diverse communities at home and abroad.

2. Widening the gap created by inequality: Globalisation has added a new dimension to existing disparities in higher education. The world of globalised higher education is highly unequal. There has always been a gap created by an inequality between the advantaged and the disadvantaged in terms of resources. Existing inequalities are merely reinforced and new barriers are erected. An overview of cross-border education shows that Africa is marginalised. Do African nations (especially in Sub-Saharan Africa) have the necessary take-off that could make home-grown education viable? Is education in Africa part of the global outfit in practical and realistic terms? In objective terms, have the forces of globalisation and internationalisation weakened or strengthened the chances of African nations in cross-border education? Although globalisation has made significant advancements in ICT, yet it has, in its attempt to make the whole world a global village, deliberately or accidentally divided the world into the superrich and absolutely poor, and Africa, at the rung of the ladder is the poorest of the poor. A lot has been said about the impact of globalisation on higher education, and basically these opinions expressed have been on two divides; the viewpoint that globalisation, the internet and the scientific community will level the playing field in the new age of knowledge interdependence, and on the other extreme end, is the position that globalisation will further engender worldwide inequality. History shows that the export of educational institutions and the linking of institutions from different countries generally represented a union of unequals. In virtually

all cases, the foreign institution dominated the local institution, or the new institution was based on foreign ideas and nonindigenous values. In addition, most international students pay for their own studies, producing significant income for the host countries - and a drain on the economy of the developing world.

3. Cultural Diversity, Acculturation and capacity building: Education has traditionally been seen as a vehicle of acculturation. The movement of people and ICT technologies across borders have aided the promotion of one's culture in other countries thereby bringing about the hybridization of culture. On the other hand, there is also the possibility of the erosion of national cultural identities instead of hybridization as it has been observed that the Western culture oftentimes has the upper hand. This raises concern as to the possibility of engendering neo-colonialism through cross-border education. A major aspect of culture which flows via education is the use of language, and in this regards, it is pertinent to mention here that the use of the English Language has increased. English, which is the most widely used second language, is also the medium of almost all of the internationally circulated scientific journals, and it also dominates other academic fields as well and serves as the language of internet transactions involving science and scholarship. The argument therefore is as regards the extent to which curriculum content, the language of instruction and the teaching/learning process of exported/imported programmes are customised to local needs thereby making programmes culturally appropriate and useful. It must be noted that foreign providers do not share the same national values and priorities with the countries they migrate into. More importantly, the importation of foreign programmes often does not help to develop the human capacity of the domestic higher education institutions and students in line with the curriculum that is relevant and responsive to the needs of the labour market while still recognizing the importance of respect of local culture and customs. For example, in the early 2000s, there were widespread training in some of the ICT programmes which were popular in Nigeria like Oracle database administration, and the resultant effect was a scenario where those trained in it were unable to get database administration jobs because the available jobs were very scarce as only few firms had implemented such high-scale database administration mechanisms.

4. Brain Drain/Gain: The quantity of skills required has outstripped the capacity of the existing higher education institutions to produce them, even in countries that have the largest networks of higher education institutions. This

is a strong reason why these countries have opted for a more immediate, ready-made solution and encouraged skill migration, especially from developing countries, leading to a 'global hunt' for talent (Kapur & McHale, 2005, as cited in Varghese, 2011). Cross-border education encourages this migration, and more often than not, Nigerian students who travel abroad for post-secondary education do not return home after their studies but instead they choose to take jobs in the countries in which they have obtained their degrees. This is referred to as brain drain/gain because while the home country of such students suffers a drain, the host country of such students enjoys a gain. However, a closer look at the more recent trends of migration reveals that such students move to other foreign countries apart from the foreign nation where they studied and get jobs there, and ultimately return to their home countries after several years of international study, work experience and exposure. This phenomenon is referred to as brain train. For a nation like Nigeria where the need for technocrats is vital, such returnees might be coming back home after they may have given their best years to foreign nations. Thus, cross-border education has become fertile ground for recruiting future highly skilled workers (Tremblay, 2002, as cited in Varghese, 2011). A very serious challenge facing developing countries and small states is how to expand the higher education system. It is becoming increasingly clear that the expansion of higher education through public institutions has its limitations, given the fiscal capacity of the state. The situation is worse for Sub-Saharan Africa considering the absence of will power of the governments of the nations in this region towards the funding of education. In the 1990s, a major conditionality which was mandatory for developing countries (including Nigeria) seeking loans from the IMF was the reduction of government subsidies on education among other sectors of national life (Itobore, 2006).

Challenges in cross border education alongside open and distance learning interventions in Nigeria

Cross-border education has some positive effects from the point of view of increasing access in higher education and reducing the knowledge gap in Nigeria, but it also has negative aspects which could seriously threaten universities in Nigeria. Presently, there is worldwide competition among tertiary institutions to internationalize, and Nigeria is several steps backward as a result of some bottlenecks. These are discussed as follows:

1. Loopholes in the Registration and Licensing of Foreign Providers: Nigeria currently has both tight (strict or restrictive) and loose regulatory frameworks (Obasi, Adesina & Obasi, 2015). At the higher education level,

the regulatory framework is restrictive even when it has some limitations in its capacity to monitor cases of illegal internet-based cross-border actions but at the lower level of diploma and IT-related programs, Nigeria appears unable to check the activities of unrecognized and rogue cross-border providers. Stakeholders believe that one of the negative consequences of market driven for-profit education is that the number of rogue institutions sometimes referred to as ‘diploma mills’, ‘canned degrees’ and ‘accreditation mills’ will increase. Such institutions offer qualifications for little or no study, but at a price. Given the diversity of regulatory environment it is often problematic to assure quality and protect student interests.

2. Complexity of Accreditation and Quality Assurance: The twin issues of accreditation and quality assurance are more complicated than those of registration and licensing. The credibility of higher education programmes and qualifications is of paramount importance for stakeholders including students, their employers, the academic community itself and the public at large. The debate bothers on the extent to which national level accreditation and quality assurance systems are able to attend to the complicating factors of education mobility across countries, cultures and jurisdictional systems. One of the biggest challenges of cross-border education has to do with striking a balance between quality and access. Considering the big challenge posed by the poor capacity of tertiary institutions in Nigeria to absorb the number of qualified candidates seeking university admission, should we gladly embrace more access to higher education while lowering the standards applicable to providers of higher education bearing in mind that when consumer demand and the need to make a financial return becomes a factor influencing the offer of educational provision, it can create a tension with other priorities such as academic standards, autonomy and integrity?

Just like the challenge of rogue institutions, another development that is worrisome is the growth in accreditation mills. These organizations are neither recognized nor legitimate and they more or less ‘sell’ accreditation status or labels without any independent assessment (Knight, 2007a). There is the challenge of establishing mechanisms on how to distinguish between bona fide and rogue accrediting bodies, especially when neither the cross-border provider nor the accrediting body are nationally based or recognized as part of a national higher education system. The desire for accreditation status is leading to a commercialization of the field of quality assurance/accreditation. The penchant for showmanship which has bedevilled the Nigerian society makes the issue accreditation mills a big problem as this encourages programmes and providers to strive to gain as many ‘accreditation’ accolades

as possible in order to increase competitiveness and perceived international legitimacy.

3. Poor ranking of Nigerian universities according to global standards: If Nigerian universities are to compete favourably for the influx of foreign academics and students, serious attention must be paid to the entire education system. The processes of research in Nigerian universities have not resulted in any Nigerian university being included among the first one thousand by the world's four ranking organizations except the Times Higher Education, London which ranked the University of Ibadan among the top 801-1000 universities in its 2018 World University Rankings (THE, 2018). In the July, 2018 Webometrics ranking from Cyber-metrics Laboratory in Spain, the highest ranking Nigerian university is the University of Ibadan which is ranked at 1076th in the world (CSIC, 2018). Both the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) also known as Shanghai Ranking and the QS World University Rankings of 2018 do not have any Nigerian university among the first one thousand universities in the world (Quacquarelli Symonds Limited, 2018; Shanghai Ranking Consultancy, 2018). In the Nigerian education system, there is often no periodic review of institutional structure, academic programmes, and facilities in line with the ever-changing global sophistication. Nigerian 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 (Robert-Okah, 2015).

The university is mainly concerned with the production, storage, dissemination and utilization of universal knowledge. Universities are institutions with dual characteristics, national and international; while the ownerships, structure and organization may always be national, the content created and knowledge imparted is universal and international in scope. The powerful universities have always dominated the production and distribution of knowledge, while weaker institutions and systems with fewer resources and lower academic standards have tended to follow in their wake (Altbach, 2004). Most of the world's universities are mainly teaching institutions, and virtually all in developing countries are in this category. Structural dependency is endemic in much of the world's academic institutions. Only very few institutions in the world can be considered research universities. In a higher sphere of operation, there are also universities that play complex roles as

regional centres, providing a conduit of knowledge and links to the top institutions. For example, the major universities in Egypt provide academic leadership for the Arabic-speaking world and conduits to the major centres, while contributing relatively little themselves.

4. Lack of Recognition of Qualifications: The credibility of higher education programmes and qualifications is tremendously crucial for stakeholders. There is an urgent need to address the issue of the lack of recognition of foreign qualifications by domestic employers or education institutions along with elitism and the tensions it creates. Credentials need to be recognised if further study or employment is desired both at home and abroad. Recognition of qualifications as far as cross-border education is concerned is sometimes very difficult and complex to manage. There are dishonest providers who claim that they or their qualifications are recognised by the government of the provider country, or the government of the receiver country or its accreditation or professional bodies when, in fact, no such recognition exists. This covers both academic and professional qualifications. Students and their families often pay considerable sums of money and end up enrolled in a programme that does not meet their expectations or needs. In making their choice for programmes of study, students are often faced with a lack of clear and accurate information, and where this is lacking low quality provision has the opportunity to flourish. While some countries will give recognition to qualifications from cross-border programmes that are duly approved for operation, others do not adopt this stand and require separate processes for the recognition of cross-border qualifications (UNESCO & Asia-Pacific Quality Network, 2006). Thus, a cross-border programme may be registered for operation, but its graduates may not be recognised as having the status of graduates if they seek public appointments.

5. Structural flaws in the Nigerian education system: There have been reforms towards increased capacity of university education in Nigeria but these have not resulted in the attraction of quantifiable foreign academics and students into the Nigerian university system. The reverse rather is the case as the number of students studying abroad is on the increase. The problem of strikes, poor funding, access and dilapidated infrastructure in Nigerian public universities as well as the high cost and inadequate staffing in private universities have contributed to Nigerians seeking cross border education. The admission process too is oftentimes not seamless and this is a major turn-off for anyone outside the country who may wish to seek admission into a Nigerian institution. What obtains in developed countries of the world is that

with the possession of regional certifications like WAEC together with success in a test of proficiency in the English Language, one can secure admission into higher institutions overseas even before travelling overseas unlike the Nigerian scenario where a foreign candidate would have to be physically present to sit for Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination and post-UTME in Nigeria. In July, 2018, the news broke that about N7.8b was remitted by JAMB to the federal government by the board as revenues by the board in 2017. A reaction that trailed the news was a criticism of the board as an avenue for milking the citizenry of their hard-earned money considering the flaws which has characterised the process of writing the examinations especially with the introduction of the computer-based system resulting in several students having to use malfunctioning computers in some examination centres thereby affecting their performance. This challenge of technology adaptation coupled with epileptic power supply has had adverse effects on the Nigerian education system. Universities in countries—like Nigeria—without deep financial resources or political will of the government to invest in education, particularly, higher education will find it virtually impossible to join the ranks of the top academic institutions.

Recommendations

In the light of global challenges such as sustainable development, renewable energy, climate changes and security or migration issues, Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind. The following recommendations are hereby advanced which, if implemented, would allow for some considerable improvement in the capacity of Nigerian universities to compete favourably and rightfully position themselves in the light of cross-border education.

1. Increased public awareness of regulatory framework: A regulatory system will only work effectively and efficiently if it is complemented by public awareness. It is not always easy to educate consumers about the needs for quality education and for adherence to a regulatory system. Relevant authorities must make consistent efforts to disseminate information about quality and regulatory systems. Furthermore, quality assurance processes should be linked to both rewards and sanctions as a way of reinforcing good conduct. In a bid to protect consumers of cross-border education in Nigeria, the Nigeria regulatory framework must be geared towards ensuring that the accreditation of foreign institutions and their programmes are carried out by the appropriate agencies in the host country. This will engender quality in provision and recognition of degrees.

2. Increased funding for universities: The Nigerian government needs to invest more in higher education in terms of physical infrastructure, programmes and research. A strict adherence to setting aside the UNESCO standard of 26% annual national budget for education will go a long way in turning around the appalling state of equipment, facilities and infrastructure can be stemmed. This will address the perception that quality international education cannot be obtained in Nigeria will continue to deplete the cream of best brains in this country. The current efforts of Nigeria tertiary institutions to actualise this noble goal by sending students abroad on exchange programme, exporting programmes, establishment of campuses and institutes that attract international students as well as participation in international research activities are laudable.

3. More collaboration between Nigerian universities and foreign counterparts: The authorities in Nigerian university, together with the Nigerian government should encourage more collaboration with foreign universities. Presently, higher institutions in Nigeria like the University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Benin and Covenant University have also entered into collaboration in research and exchange programmes for staff and students.

4. Addressing the challenge of poor power supply: The challenge of epileptic power supply which has far reaching consequences on the competitiveness of Nigerian universities in attracting foreign academics and students can be addressed if proper attention is turned towards harnessing the potentials of solar energy. The establishment and proper maintenance of solar farms should be encouraged in every Nigerian university so as to meet their power needs.

5. Continuous innovation: The Nigerian education system especially the university sector cannot afford to remain static; continuous efforts must be made to innovate and keep abreast with current world trends in the academia so as to take advantage of the potential of higher education as the catalyst for economic development, entrepreneurship and regional cooperation. A workable approach towards ensuring this should be adopting a structure for embarking on series of both short and long term strategic plans and implement as well as continuously evaluate them to meet the dynamic needs of modern world.

6. Technological adaptation: For Nigeria to compete favourably in the present drive for the internationalisation of universities, part of the measures to be taken would entail that Nigerian universities have to remain fully networked for the internet and information and communications technology. This is a costly measure just like library acquisitions but its gains will be invaluable. A policy towards an upgrade of the curriculum content of courses undertaken in Nigerian universities to be at par with international standards should be developed with proper structures for its full implementation. Nigerian universities (especially the approved distance learning centres) must be encouraged to establish virtual libraries which should be functional all-day long and all-year round, and these libraries must be linked up with recent global researches managed by international bodies.

7. Internationalisation of entrance into Nigerian universities: The current modality whereby JAMB is written once a year whereby the candidate has to be physically present in one of the accredited CBT examination centres in Nigeria has to be modified so as to accommodate candidates from outside the country. Also, the duration of the validity of the JAMB result should be increased so that successful candidates would still be in a position to present their results in seeking admission after the year in which they sat for the examination.

Conclusion:

The internationalization of education especially cross-border education has to do with the impartation 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 thereby bringing to the fore the universal dimension of the entity called the university. Quality assurance of cross-border education is still a relatively new field and that ideas and approaches are still evolving. Cross-border education, especially the movement of students, scholars and professors will introduce new issues to immigration policies in terms of visas, working permits, residency status and even dual citizenship. What are the long-term implications for migration patterns and immigration status for Nigeria? Cross-border education, including science and technology research and development, are seen as tools for strategic alliances between countries and institutions. Riding on the wings of cross-border education, what is the emerging role of higher education in bilateral and regional foreign policy development for Nigeria? These and many more questions must be answered if Nigeria is to take advantage of the opportunities embedded in cross-border education.

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