

Globalization and Higher Education in 21st Century Nigeria

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Abstract

The world has been described as a global village due to enhanced global communication and interaction among people of different nationalities. Education is not left out in this interaction as there are available means or mechanisms through which ideas and information are exchanged among scholars and seekers of knowledge of the world. This paper examines issues on globalization and higher education in 21st century Nigeria. In order for clearer understanding of this matter, this topic has been segmented into sub-headings, clearly stating the content analysis of this study. The objective of this paper is to carefully examine the role of globalization on the development of education, to assess its influence on scholars in the Nigerian educational system, it considers the progress made by Nigerian scholars and the position of Nigerian students at global educational endeavours. Careful assessment of these facts reveals some gaps on the Nigerian educational system that have hindered effective competition by Nigerian institutions with their counterparts at the international level. This study has used secondary sources such as text books and journals. It has suggested the way forward for a globally competitive higher education in Nigeria.

Introduction

Globalization in the 21st century has become a familiar and popular concept. The word globalization, was not coined until the second half of the 20th century, the origin of globalization has been traced back to the period between 1450 and 1500 A.D. A period referred to as the mercantilist period and characterized by the development of trade in the quest for commercial empires to broaden their markets. (Ogohi: 2014.) People today refer to the world as a “global village”, globalization has enhanced global communication, interaction and exchange of ideas among people of different nationalities and background. Globalization transcends all spheres of

life including the educational sector, as scholarly ideas are made available to those in search of knowledge.

The national policy on education (NPE 2004), defines education as that process that helps to develop the whole man physically, mentally, socially and technologically to enable him function effectively in any environment he finds himself. Education encompasses teaching and learning of specific skills, imparting knowledge and enhancing positive judgment. Education therefore is intended to facilitate the realization of soft potential and latent of an individual (Aina et al: 2010) Higher education in Nigeria is viewed as a vital tool for the acquisition of good jobs and high income.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Globalization

Adesina (2012), see globalization as a complex and multifaceted concept that has generated controversy from its meaning, its time line and its future as well as whether it is serving the interest of all or it is just benefitting just a few countries or individuals in the world. Due to the fact that it cuts across almost all discipline, each of the discipline proffers varying definitions and interpretations for the concept. Scholars do not agree to the right definition of this concept and this has contributed to keep globalization as a highly contested subject.

Shenkar and Luo (2004) refer to globalization as “the growing economic interdependencies of countries world wide through the increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and services and of international capital flows, through the rapid and widespread diffusion of technology and information”. Globalization involves economic integration, transfer of policies, transmission of knowledge and transfer of cultural ideas, it is a

global process, a concept, a revolution and a establishment of a system free from sociopolitical control. Globalization has helped to liberalize knowledge by creating mediums for people to explore information

Iyayi (2004) posits that globalization “has been used rather loosely to stand for variety of things: the shrinking of the world into a global village, the awesome changes brought about or mandated by the revolution in information technology, the collapse of boundaries between different worlds, expanding connectivity of all forms of interaction”. Scholte (2000) agrees with Iyayi as he maintains that globalization facilitates the removal of barriers among nations of the world, thereby giving social relations unhindered access. Globalization reveals the interconnectedness within and across regions of the world due to the growing social, economic, political networks, education, information and communications technology of different groups of people. It reveals the extent to which the actions of one group of humans exert either positive or negative impact on others. Giddens (1990) defines the concept as “the intensification of world wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”, things that happen on one side of the planet may likely affect those on the other side of the planet, while those things an individual does in his own community can have a world wide impact. (Ajibolosoo 2007)

Ogohi (2014) sees globalization as “the process of international integration as a product of exchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture in which world wide exchange of national and cultural resources occurs in the process. Globalization aims at diffusing the cultures, commerce and communication of countries of the world in order to bring homogenization. There maybe different definitions of this concept but one need to understand

that globalization as a process of integration and diffusion of ideas involves the weak and strong countries of the world.

Higher Education

Education is the process of facilitating learning, knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits of a group of people transferred to other people, through story telling, discussion, teaching, training or research. This usually takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves. An experience may be considered educational when it has a formative effect on the way an individual thinks, feels or acts. (Wikipedia: 2012) Education is commonly divided into stages such as preschool, primary school, secondary school and university. Education can take place in formal and informal setting.

The national policy on education (NPE 2004), defines education as that process that helps to develop man physically, mentally, socially and technologically to enable him function effectively in any environment he finds himself. Education encompasses teaching and learning of specific skills, imparting knowledge and enhancing positive judgment. Education therefore is intended to facilitate the realization of soft potential and latent of an individual (Ainna: 2010) Higher education, post-secondary, tertiary education or third level education is an optional final stage of formal learning that occurs after secondary education. Often delivered at universities, academies, colleges, seminaries and institutes of technology, higher education is also available through certain college-level institutions, including vocational schools, trade schools and other career colleges that award academic degrees or professional certifications. Tertiary education at non-degree level is sometimes referred to as further education or continuing education as distinct

from higher education (Wikipedia: 2012). Higher education is an educational level that follows a completion of a secondary school.

Higher education could also be referred to as tertiary, third stage or postsecondary education, is the non-compulsory educational level that follows the completion of a high or secondary school. Tertiary education includes undergraduate and postgraduate education, as well as vocational education and training. Such education is mainly provided by colleges and universities and such institutions are regarded as tertiary institutions. Higher education involves work towards a degree or foundation degree. University education includes teaching and research. (Wikipedia: 2012).

States' invest in education but investment policies are usually nationalistic and often pursue aggressively nationalistic innovative policies. Education in general and higher education in particular are historically tied to inherently national objectives, such as promoting national culture or building national elites. But "national" education investment policies are directly or indirectly internationalized. Even in those countries consciously trying to create absolute advantage and national system of innovation, science professionals are regularly trained either in the developed countries or trained through information received from technologically advanced countries and they may also work in these developed countries with institutions that have global affiliation.

Theoretical Framework

Globalization is rooted in the theory of modernization, which entails "a total transformation of a traditional society into the types of technology and associated social organization that characterize the advanced economically prosperous nations of western world."

(Severino: 2014). From this definition, the assumption that all societies can be classified as either modern or traditional comes to the fore. According to modernization theory, a traditional society is characterized by irrationality, fatalistic attitudes and ascribed values while a modern society is considered to be rational, forward looking, competitive and achievement oriented (Webster 1990).

A key assumption of the theory of modernization is that western societies are more developed than third world societies and given the right prescription, the third world will eventually develop so as to appear like those of the west. From this assumption arose the view that there is only one path of development (from traditional to modern) which a society can follow. Modernization has its theoretical basis in functionalism and is clearly implied in the work of such theorists such as Spencer, Durkheim and Parsons (Bourdieu and Wacquant: 1992). These classical theorists had a conception of unilinear development because their arguments were premised on the idea that human societies moved from a stage of simple societies in the direction of more complex societies (Van der Merwe: 1990).

Globalization is considered as a central element of the modernization process that is mainly responsible for the transfer and diffusion of modernizing western values, knowledge and technologies to developing countries. In terms of this argument, institutions of higher learning play a critical role in the diffusion of innovation process. Education theory seeks to know or understand and prescribe educational policy and practice. Education theory includes many topics such as pedagogy, andragogy, curriculum, learning and education policy, organization and leadership. Educational thought is informed by many disciplines such as history, philosophy, sociology and psychology. For instance a cultural theory of education considers how education occurs through the totality of culture, including prisons, households, and religious institutions as

well as schools (Wikipedia). Other theories include the behaviourist theory of education that comes from educational psychology and the functionalist theory of education that comes from sociology of education. Normative philosophies or theories of education may make use of the results of philosophical thought and a factual inquiries about human beings and the philosophy of learning but in any case they propound views about what education should be, what dispositions it should cultivate, why it ought to cultivate them, how and in whom it should do so and what forms it should take. Normative theories of curriculum aim to describe or set norms for conditions surrounding many of the concepts and constructs that define curriculum. These normative propositions differ from others in that normative curriculum theory is not necessarily untestable.

Globalization and Higher Education in Nigeria

Many factors contribute to the growth of globalization, the major being advancement in transportation, communication and technology. The current wave of globalization could be attributed to the surge in technological advancement along with interaction of many actors at different levels of the economy. Globalization means different things to different people. To some it creates positive political, economic, educational and technological progress. For others globalization has changed situations in such a manner that power of state is determined by power of firm.

This phenomenon to a large extent has impacted both positively and negatively on higher education in Nigeria. It is important to note that globalization effects are not optional for developing countries including Nigeria, but as compelling and imperative. Developing countries are pulled into global educational, political, economic and social relationship without their

consent. Global interaction has increased the spread of knowledge and information among scholars globally, it has made access to information easy. It has also made possible the transfer of cultural ideas. In the globalized world poverty and lack access to the required facilities in some African countries has made it difficult for these countries to compete with their counterparts in other parts of the world as globalization involves competition (Carnoy: 1999).

Positive Impact of Globalization on Higher Education in Nigeria

It is important to note that institutions of higher learning in Nigeria as part of society can not immune themselves against the global forces that prevail in society. While the effect of globalization on Higher education remain contentious, advocates of globalization argue that due to technological globalization, nations have become highly interconnected to the extent of becoming a boundary-less global village. This has the critical implication that universities will cease to operate as isolated institutions in particular countries but rather as higher education institutions connected to the global world that transcends their countries of origin (Meyer et al: 2011). The rise of a global society, driven by technology and communication developments is shaping students into global citizens with a broad range of skills to apply to a competitive, information based society. This is important as the future of countries is often believed to depend on their ability to compete in a global market where industrial based economies are giving way to knowledge based industries (Chinnammai: 2005). The advent of global technology and communication systems has helped education become a life long and training process that develops transferable skills and knowledge that can be applied to competitive markets.²¹ (Meyer et al: 2011)

It is important to point out that boundary less knowledge society has made it possible for institutions to collaborate easily with other institutions across the world. This has enabled institutions to compete with the leading institutions globally. Globalization help universities in the area of staffing and student enrolment as they are well positioned to attract, appoint and enroll staff and students respectively not only from their country but also internationally. This is important as it helps to foster a global citizen's mindset and improve higher education. Globalization enables institutions to enroll, teach and assess students globally through information technology system. It has helped universities break the barriers that have impeded the delivery of education in many universities. It has made easy the transfer of knowledge and information.

Negative Impact of Globalization on Higher Education in Nigeria

Globalization acts as a catalyst for social and economic development has severe limitations since nations do not necessarily enter the globalization process the same time and do not benefit equally from the process. Since western countries entered this process before Africa, they are more advanced and tend to dominate the process.

Globalization has resulted to increase in the availability of skilled workers, particularly scientists trained in innovation centers in the developed countries who dominate some highly skilled employment opportunities in Nigeria. This has deprived Nigerian ill equipped scientists' opportunities in a globalized world.

Globalization demand for certain types of higher level skills, puts pressure on certain areas of life endeavours, particularly in those economies more closely tied into the globalization process. Therefore students prefer areas where they will receive immediate benefit of their

endeavour while other areas are neglected. In the past decades most countries have undergone rapid expansion of their primary and secondary education systems, although this may not be applicable to all countries. University education also expanded, but given the bias of global demand for higher education, the tendency is to push up rates of return to investment in higher education relative to the pay-offs to investing in primary and secondary education. Rates of return to higher levels of education are also pushed up by structural adjustment policies. (Severino Machingambi: 2014)

Globalization has crucial implications in terms of the status, purpose, structure and the content that universities offer (Burbules and Torres: 2000). For instance, certain forms of knowledge may be accorded more status than others on the basis of its perceived economic usefulness and its technological value (Yang: 2004). Therefore market-related knowledge disciplines such as technology and business tend to be given more privilege than others such as social sciences and humanities. As Greaves et al (2004) observe that in a global capitalist society, education acquires a particular, distinctive economic and business orientation which does not necessarily provide a holistic educational experience that enriches the learner. Thus, disciplines or forms of knowledge that help develop national culture or other forms of cultural heritage may be marginalized as the focus will be on those learning areas that tend to promote cosmopolitan values. Bourdieu believes that this is one way which indigenous people lose their vernacular knowledge and thus their cultural worth. This has negatively affected higher education as it is considered less equipped to respond to the social, cultural, legal and political challenges of the developing nations. This gives the credence to the view that globalization acts as an instrument for the spread of Western hegemony in higher education system particularly in developing countries (Shenkar and Luo: 2004).

The above argument raises the question that if globalization forces universities to reconstruct themselves as commercial enterprises competing in the knowledge business, how will people from lower social class benefit? This encourages the debate on the capacity of higher education to act as an instrument of social, economic and political emancipation. This situation becomes even more challenging given the fact that globalization opens space for private organizations to participate in the provision of higher education while the state gradually withdraws from its role as a major funder of the education for the masses (Lewin: 1997).

CONCLUSION

Globalization has created a boundary-less global world. This has exposed Nigeria's institutions of higher learning to global opportunities and competition. These opportunities vary and can contribute positively to the development of individuals and the State. In the area of higher education in Nigeria, there is a gap between Nigerian educational system and the Western countries as achievement in this sector is scientifically measured. As a result of challenges faced by Nigeria in the field of technological achievement, Nigeria has not been favoured by any global educational assessment. This has hindered effective competition by Nigerian institutions with their counterparts at the international level.

Although Nigeria has her own educational system, there is a link with the global system, therefore Nigeria can not operate in isolation. The country feels the influence of the international system and it influences scholarly ideas and exposes scholars to global information. This influence might have both positive and negative implication on Nigeria's educational system as well as the students. Globalization has the implication of weakening conscientious research efforts, it exposes Nigerian student to some "unwholesome" cultural beliefs and such beliefs

accepted, destroys some fundamental traditional beliefs. In a global capitalist society, education acquires a particular, distinctive economic and business orientation which does not necessarily provide a holistic educational experience that enriches the learner. In its overall assessment, globalization has immense benefit and can enhance educational performance and educational structure in Nigeria.

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