

Internationalisation of University Education in South-South Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and Strategies

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Abstract

The study examined issues, challenges and possible strategies associated with internationalisation of university education in South-South Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was utilised. Three research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. A sample of 480 lecturers and 600 students were purposively drawn from six universities in the area of study. The main instrument was the questionnaire with reliability index of 0.84. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions, while z-test statistical analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that lecturers and students have low understanding of the concept of internationalization and challenges confronting internationalization include, inadequate investment in teaching resources and research, poor infrastructural base of universities and unstable academic calendar of universities. Strategies for promoting internationalisation include, improved funding and openness of universities towards internationalisation among others. Some useful recommendations aimed at enhancing internationalisation were offered. The study concluded that internationalisation of university education requires proper understanding of internationalisation, recognition of the challenges and strategies in the implementation process.

Keywords: Internationalisation, University, Education, Issues, Challenges, Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Globally universities respond to trends and challenges presented by globalization in various ways. One such response is the internationalization of the university campuses. In order to benefit from the global trend educational institutions are establishing collaborations with regional and international universities. The international collaborations among universities have expanded significantly during the past two decades (De Wit, 2000). Internationalization has many definitions and dimensions. Internationalization can be seen as the process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution (De Wit, 2000). It is also being used progressively to discuss the international dimensions of higher education (Ghasempoor, Liaghatdar & Jafari, 2011) . Knight (2008) sees internationalization as a process of integrating international and cultural dimensions into the teaching, research and service functions of the education institution and also indicated that internationalization is changing the world of higher education and globalization is changing the world of internationalization. Althach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009) defined internationalization as the variety of policies and programs that universities and governments implement to respond to globalization. Some of the programmes include, creation of international programmes departments, exchange programmes, cross-border

distance education, and e-learning. In recent years, the international dimension of higher education has become more prominent on the agenda of many governments, tertiary institutions, and accreditation agencies. Explaining its scope in the future, Altbach and Knight (2007) observed that currently two million students are studying as international students, but approximately 15 million students will study outside their countries by 2025. The scope of internationalization of higher education has taken various levels of interests and areas of focus that range from traditional study abroad programmes, taking courses at universities in other countries, through internet or face to face arrangements such as branch campuses. Other activities include international partnerships, academic programmes and research activities that emphasize advancement of international students' perspectives and skills, promotion of foreign language programmes and access to cross-cultural understanding (Kreber, 2009; Robert-Okah , 2014).

There are many factors that serve as driving forces for internationalization. These include, the desire to promote mutual understanding, the migration of skilled workers in a globalized economy, institutional ambition to generate additional revenues, and the necessity for emerging economies to build

educated workforce in their home countries (Adeoye, Anyikwu & Avant, 2011). The aforementioned internationalization driving forces also serve as four different approaches to cross-border higher education. Three of them, skilled migration, revenue generation, capacity building have strong economic drive which emerged in the 1990s, while the fourth mutual understanding has a longer history (OECD, 2004). The mutual understanding approach comprise political, cultural, academic and development aid goals , and encourages mobility of domestic and foreign students and staff through scholarship and academic exchange programmes as well as supports academic partnerships between educational institutions (OECD, 2004). This approach does not involve any strong push to recruit international students. The skilled migration approach shares the goals of the mutual understanding approach, but gives stronger emphasis to the recruitment of selected international students and aims at attracting talented students to work in the host country.

Within the skilled migration approach, students are supplemented by active promotion of a country's higher education sector abroad, combined with easing of the relevant visa or immigration regulations. This approach can have a variety of objectives, such as student from certain areas, post-graduates or research students rather than students in a specific field. This approach generally results in increase in the number of international students. The revenue generating approach, shares the goals of the mutual understanding and skilled migration approaches, but offers higher education services on a more or less full-fee basis without subsidies (Adeoye, Anyikwu & Avant, 2011). The capacity-building approach encourages cross-border higher education, delivered as a relatively quick way to build an emerging country's capacity. As previously noted, the mutual understanding approach encourages scholarship and academic exchanges. Thus, scholarship programmes supporting the outward mobility of domestic civil servants, teachers, academics and students are important policy instruments (Adeoye, Anyikwu & Avant, 2011)

One of the salient motives behind internationalization efforts is profit motive as many universities see international efforts as a way to attract revenue to improve funding. The international universities are eager to recruit international students so that they can charge higher fees and make profit. The western universities are establishing branch campuses, but these branches are making profit that go back to the main campus. In other words, these branches charge high fees from students of developing countries to finance the developed institution.. The beneficial aspects of internationalization include, improved academic quality, internationally oriented students, staff, national and international citizenship for students and staff from developing nations. For developed countries, revenue generation and

brain gain are potential benefits (Jibeen, & Khan, 2015; Uche & Ahunanya, 2013) . In every sense including ratio of international students, Western developed countries gain the main financial benefits .Other positive sides of internationalization include diversifying and enhancing the learning environment for the benefit of domestic students, the University, and the nation. Furthermore, it has the potential to transform the lives of international students as it leads to the production of graduates who are internationally knowledgeable and cross culturally sensitive. Student mobility allows them to transfer to a different environment where they can understand the connections between their local and the global environment (Jibeen & Khan ,2015).

Statement of the Problem

Internationalization is generally seen as a major trend in the development of university education in recent years. However, there are indications that at the institutional level the reality of internationalization is still far-fetched in Nigeria. For instance, issues bordering on how to cope with trends, challenges, and promotion of internationalization strategies remain hazy. Though, the number of studies on internationalization of university education has been growing, a few of such studies have been conducted in many higher institutions across the globe. Research efforts in Nigeria should not lag behind for there is the need for academic partnerships and collaborations with other parts of the world to address global challenges such as sustainable development. One way this can be achieved is through internationalization of university education. Though, in recent years there has been increased resource capacity building efforts in Nigerian universities, it does appear the universities have not been properly repositioned for the realities of internationalization. As a result, this study seeks to explore issues, challenges and possible strategies for the internationalization of university education in South-South Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated the internationalisation of university education in South-South Nigeria, and challenges confronting the implementation process as well as implementation strategies.

However, the study was aimed at the following specific objectives:

- Determine the level of lecturers and students' awareness on the internationalisation of university education in South-South Nigeria.
- Determine the challenges confronting internationalisation of university education in south-south Nigeria.
- Identify strategies that could enhance internationalisation of university education in South-South Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- What level of awareness do lecturers and students' have on the internationalisation of university education in South-South Nigeria?
- What are the challenges confronting internationalisation of university education in South-South Nigeria?

- What strategies can be adopted for the internationalisation of university education in South-South Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- There is no significant difference between lecturers and students' mean scores rating on their level of awareness on the internationalisation of university education in South-South Nigeria.
- There is no significant difference between lecturers and students' mean scores rating on the challenges confronting internationalisation of university education in South-South Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The sample consisted of 600 students and 480 lecturers purposively drawn from six universities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The universities involved comprised Rivers State University, University of Calabar, University of Uyo, Delta State University, Niger Delta University, and University of Benin. The main instrument used in the study was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was titled, "Lecturers and Students' Knowledge of Internationalisation of University Questionnaire (LSKIUQ)" and was structured on a 4 point Likert type scale. Face and content validity were ensured, the reliability coefficient of 0.84 was established for the study. Research questions 1, 2 and 3 were answered using mean sets and rank order statistics, while hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-test statistics. Also, any item on the questionnaire equal to or above the criterion mean of 2.50 was acceptable, while any item below the criterion mean was rejected .

RESULTS

Research Question One: What level of awareness do lecturers and students have on the internationalisation of university education in south-south states of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Lecturers and Students Awareness of Internationalisation of University Education

S/N	Item	Lecturers		Students		Mean Set		Decision
		N =		N =		\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_1	
1.	Understand the meaning of internationalisation of university education.	2.50	0.91	2.28	0.76	2.39		Low
2.	Not sure it exists in my university.	2.54	1.71	2.50	0.54	2.52		High
3.	Internationalisation involves exchange programmes in teaching students' teaching and research.	2.61	0.81	2.46	0.64	2.54		High
4.	Promotes intercultural competencies.	2.59	1.12	2.48	0.77	2.51		High
5.	Accelerates knowledge transfer at institutional level.	2.48	1.80	2.50	0.54	2.39		Low
6.	Provides modern competencies and experiences.	2.41	1.60	2.34	1.30	2.38		Low
7.	Exposes students and lecturers to international collaboration.	2.55	1.25	2.45	0.66	2.50		High
Aggregate Mean Set						2.15		Low

Table 1 shows the level of lecturers and students' awareness of the concept of internationalisation. The result indicates the following mean sets: understand the meaning of internationalisation of university education (2.39); Not sure it exists in my university (2.52); internationalisation involves exchange programmes in teaching and research (2.54); promotes intercultural competencies (2.51); Accelerates knowledge transfer at institutional level (2.39); provides modern competencies and experiences (2.38); and exposes students and lecturers to international collaboration (2.50). From the analysis in Table 1, and with aggregate mean set of 2.15, which is below the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be deduced that lecturers and students' level of awareness of internationalisation of university education is low.

Research Question Two: What are the challenges confronting internationalisation of university education in south-south Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Challenges Confronting Internationalisation of University Education.

S/N	Item	Lecturers		Students		Mean Set \bar{X}_1 \bar{X}_2	Rank Order	Remarks
		N =	SD	N =	SD			
1.	Poor infrastructural facilities base of Nigerian universities.	2.72	0.27	2.56	0.60	2.64	2 nd	Agreed
2.	Intercultural diversity issues.	2.41	0.30	2.33	0.44	2.37	7 th	Disagreed
3.	Inadequate investment in teaching and research activities in universities.	2.64	0.29	2.66	0.41	2.65	1 st	Agreed
4.	Recognition of prior qualifications grading system.	2.45	1.07	2.32	0.37	2.39	6 th	Disagreed
5.	Poor power supply in universities.	2.41	0.24	2.52	0.23	2.47	4 th	Disagreed
6.	Unstable academic calendar of Nigerian universities.	2.57	0.22	2.62	0.38	2.60	3 rd	Agreed
7.	Inadequate local and wide networks in universities.	2.44	0.28	2.38	0.96	2.41	5 th	Disagreed

Data in Table 2 presented the mean score and standard deviation of lecturers and students on the challenges confronting internationalisation of university education. The items in the table with mean set scores equal to or greater than the criterion mean of 2.50, were rated as challenges confronting internationalisation of university education. These challenges according to their mean set magnitude and ranking include: inadequate investment in teaching resources and research (2.65); poor infrastructural facilities base of Nigerian universities (2.64) and unstable academic calendar of Nigerian universities (2.60). Thus, as indicated in table 2, the challenges confronting internationalisation of university education in south-south Nigeria include, inadequate investment in teaching resources and research, poor infrastructural base of universities and unstable academic calendar of universities.

Research Question Three: What strategies can be adopted for the internationalisation of university education in south-south Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Lecturers and Students on Strategies for Internationalisation of University Education

S/N	Item	Lecturers		Students		Mean Set \bar{X}_1 \bar{X}_2	Rank Order	Remarks
		\bar{X}_1	SD	\bar{X}_1	SD			
1.	Openness of universities towards internationalisation.	3.08	0.62	3.65	0.28	3.07	3 rd	Agreed
2.	High quality international scientific and development co-operation.	2.98	0.48	2.82	0.32	2.90	6 th	Agreed
3.	Promotion of intercultural competencies.	2.82	0.56	2.86	0.55	2.84	7 th	Agreed
4.	Targeting priority regions and countries.	3.21	0.23	2.68	0.87	2.95	5 th	Agreed
5.	Mobility of academic staff and students from within and outside Nigeria.	1.28	0.62	1.44	0.61	1.39	10 th	Disagreed
6.	Adaptation of natural and transactional policies.	2.24	0.53	1.64	0.33	1.94	9 th	Disagreed
7.	Collaboration with high quality international universities.	3.11	0.27	3.00	0.42	3.06	4 th	Agreed
8.	Improved funding of university education to enhance technology base.	3.21	0.30	3.14	1.12	3.18	2 nd	Agreed
9.	Improved professional development of academic staff.	3.24	0.29	3.18	0.88	3.21	1 st	Agreed
10.	Adequate institutional training and basic skill acquisition for students.	2.48	1.07	2.29	0.35	2.39	8 th	Disagreed

Data in Table 3 presented mean and standard deviation of lecturers and students on strategies for the internationalisation of university education. The items in the table with mean set score equal to or greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 were rated as strategies that need to be adopted for the internationalisation of university education. These strategies according to their mean set score magnitude and ranking include, improved professional development of academic staff (3.21); improved funding of university to enhance technology base (3.18); openness of universities towards internationalisation (3.07); collaboration with high quality international universities (3.06); targeting priority regions and countries (2.95); high quality international scientific and development co-operation (2.90) and promotion of intercultural competencies (2.84). Lecturers and students disagreed on items 5, 6, and 10 in the table with mean set scores less than the mean criterion of 2.50. From the analysis in Table 3, it can therefore be deduced that the strategies that needs to be adopted for the internationalisation of university education include , improved professional development of academic staff, improved funding of university education to enhance technological base, openness of universities towards internationalisation, collaboration with high quality international universities, targeting priority regions and countries, high quality international scientific and development co-operation, and promotion of intercultural competencies.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between lecturers and students' mean scores rating on their level of awareness on the internationalisation of university education in south-south Nigeria.

Table 4: Z-test analysis of difference between lecturers and students on the level of awareness of internationalisation of university education

Status	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF.	Z-Cal.	Z-Crit.	Level of Sig.	Decision
Lecturers	300	2.72	1.04	898	1.24	1.96	0.05	Accept
Students	600	3.81	2.11					

Table 4 reveals that the z-test analysis of the difference between mean scores of lecturers and students on the level of awareness of internationalisation of university education. The result shows that z-calculated value of 1.24 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the hypothesis which states that, there is no significant difference between lecturers and students' mean scores rating on their level of awareness on the internationalisation of university education is upheld.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between lecturers and students' mean scores rating on the challenges confronting internationalisation of university education in south-south Nigeria

Table 5: Z-test on the analysis of difference between lecturers and students on the challenges confronting university education

Status	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Z-Cal.	Z-Crit.	Level of Sig.	Decision
Lecturers	300	2.55	1.04	898	1.02	1.96	0.05	Accept
Students	600	2.72	0.95					

Table 5 reveals that the z-test analysis of difference between lecturers and students on the challenges confronting university education. The result indicates that z-calculated value of 1.02 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The implication of the result is that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between lecturers and students' mean scores rating on the challenges confronting internationalisation of university education is accepted. Furthermore, it means that both lecturers and students have similar view on the challenges confronting internationalisation of university education.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings emanating from research question one showed that lecturers and students' level of awareness of the concept of internationalisation of university education was low with aggregate mean set of 2.15 which is below the criterion mean of 2.50. The finding is consistent with that of Adeoye, Anyikwu and Avant (2011) who found a low understanding of the concept of internationalisation across Africa. Lecturers and students not having a good understanding of internationalisation is surprising especially in the era of globalization that has created interconnected competitive global market. Also, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between lecturers and students' mean scores rating on the level of their awareness on internationalisation university education was upheld. This implies that both lecturers and students have similar perceptions of the concept of internationalisation.

Findings from research question two as shown in Table 2, indicates that the challenges confronting internationalisation of university education include, inadequate investment in teaching resources and research (2.65); poor infrastructural base of universities (2.65), and unstable academic calendar of Nigerian public universities (2.60). This finding is in agreement with Jibeen and Khan (2015) who identified some benefits and costs of internationalisation of higher education. These challenges could present a major deficit for the internationalisation of university education in south-south Nigeria.

Also, findings on research question three as shown in Table 3 showed that strategies that could promote internationalisation include, improved professional development (3.21), Improved funding of university (3.18), openness of universities towards internationalisation

(3.07), collaboration with high quality international universities (3.06), targeting priority regions and countries (2.95), high quality international scientific and development co-operation (2.90), and promotion of intercultural competencies (2.84). These findings are supported with previous works of Robert-Okah (2014) and Uche and Ahunanya (2013) who proffered strategies for the enhancement of institutional internationalization of university education in Nigeria. These strategies as identified should be given institutional perspective for effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

From the study, lecturers and students have a low understanding of the concept of internationalisation. Also, some of the challenges associated with internationalisation include, inadequate investment in teaching resources and research, poor infrastructural base of universities and unstable academic calendar of Nigerian universities. These challenges would appear to be a major deficit for internationalisation. Some of the strategies that could strengthen internationalisation include, improved professional development, adequate funding of universities, and openness of universities towards internationalisation among others. This study concludes that effective internationalisation of university education requires recognition of the connectedness of level of awareness of internationalisation, challenges, and strategies advanced in the study.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings some recommendations were proffered as follows:

- A definite barrier to increased internationalisation is that of low understanding of the concept. To address this deficit, Nigerian universities should be involved in exchange programmes for academic staff and students. This would expose participants to the tenets of internationalisation.
- To address some of the challenges confronting internationalisation, the proprietors of public universities in Nigeria should adequately fund university education. Proper funding will improve the infrastructural base of the universities and also link them with global researches and educational resources.
- As part of the strategies to promote internationalisation, South-South Nigerian universities should re-position itself through openness towards internationalisation and collaboration with high impact international universities. This implies that some primordial, obsolete ideas, and policies restricting the powers of universities to admit students without interference from the National Universities Commission should be discarded.

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