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Internationalizing University Culture in the midst of Change and Quality

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ABSTRACT
The Paper examines the effect of internationalisation on the university culture. Increasingly, universities across the globe are taking the initiative to internationalise university culture in order to produce graduates who can adapt in a changing environment andretain quality. The objectives of the present research are to address: perceptions, challenges of Internationalizing university culture, and addressing change and quality of its services. Although cultural diversity breeds strength, the question is: Have cultural differences become an instrument for destruction or strength? The subject among universities in Cameroon influences development of the economy, adaptation and productivity in a changing environment, as universities strive to improve the quality of their education. The study comprises a web-based survey, analysis of literature, involving an excellent review of relevant articles in addition to deductive content analysis of the data generated; and it examined ways of adapting to change and quality in higher education. In light of the data that have been collected, there is a correlation between addressing change and improving standards. Further, the findings show that Internationalizing university culture evidently has an impact on change and the quality of education; this, thus, influences development of research, students' mobility, teachers' mobility, and competitiveness of the university.

Keywords: Change, Internationalizing University Culture, Quality

INTRODUCTION

This is a concept paper, which notes that internationalizing university culture has become commonplace in contemporary research as more and more universities are under the pressure of matching the changing technological, socio-economic and political forces emanating from the broader postindustrial, external environment. More evidently, the unparalleled growth, complexity and competitiveness of the global economy, with its associated sociopolitical and technological forces, has been creating enormous pressure on higher educational institutions to respond to the changing environment with far reaching institutional adaptations involving "...significant transformation in the organization of adaptations research, training, and administration in higher education" (Cohen, 1997, p.549).It is our view that there is a growing hypothesis which contends that, in order to achieve competitive advantage in both national and international markets, universities have to increasingly adopt strategies for internationalisation. Movement toward the internationalisation of research and development activities, therefore, has expanded considerably during the past decade.

Internationalisation, at the national, sector and institutional levels, is defined by Knight (2003, p. 2) as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education". Hudzik's (2011) definition of *comprehensive internationalisation* expands on Knight's (2004) definition by identifying how internationalisation impacts all aspects of post-secondary institutions. Comprehensive internationalisation "…shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty students and all academic and support units" (Hudzik,2011, p. 6). Hudzik (2011, p. 6) concludes that comprehensive internationalisation is "an institutional imperative" that "impacts all of campus life". In furtherance of the concept of internationalisation, it is understood as the 'process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, function or delivery of post-secondary education' (Knight, 2004, p. 9). As a result of colonialism, African universities have developed with a specific, but rather narrow, international outlook. In concordance with the continent's colonial

history, most African states developed tertiary education structures which were inspired by those of their respective colonial masters, and worked with partners in the relevant former colonial countries. After independence, this focus did not shift fundamentally.

Higher education in Africa is currently in the process of casting off its colonial moorings and embracing internationalisation in the true sense of the word. African universities have, therefore, set sail towards a brave new vision characterised by setting the internationalisation agenda that is founded on globally accepted and theoretically-based principles (Jooste, 2012). As African universities embark on the journey to developing practices that can become the foundation for long-term sustainability of internationalisation, they need to develop and adopt new practices to face the 21st century's challenges (Jooste, 2012). The question which consequently arises is: What should the future foundations of internationalization in Africa be? One possible approach would be to continue on the mainstream trajectory; however, there is a counter argument that the African higher education response to globalisation should be different. Provocatively, De Wit has posed the question whether there is a necessity to deinternationalise African Higher Education to overcome Western hegemony (Jowi, Knight and Sehoole, 2013). While 'de-Internationalizing' would be fallacious, it is important that a particular African process for internationalisation be developed, fully reflective of the African identity. It is impossible to sustain internationalisation processes if they are not based on a sound sense of identity and a cultural foundation.

Generally, internationalisation is understood as the 'process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, function or delivery of post-secondary education' (Knight, 2004, p. 9). As such, different cultural settings have diverse needs and their adaption to a global phenomenon on change and universality is addressed somewhat differently. However, these variations in emphasis and direction tend to share similar characteristics as explained by Altbach (2002) and Knight (1994). Altbach (2002:29) has noted that "internationalisation refers to the specific policies and initiatives of individual institutions, systems, or countries that deal with global trends".

Specific calls for the adaptation of the university through internationalisation come from various sources (Marvin 2003). Adaption is viewed here as an aspect of a process of organisational change and innovation involving openness and responsiveness to changing demands emanating from the external environment. Internationalisation requires organisational adaptation, that is, a process involving "modifications and alterations in the organisation or its components in order to adjust to changes in the external environment" (Cameron, 1984, p. 123). Notwithstanding, the struggle equally involves in the midst of change, quality preservation or disregard of valued education and relevance. This is an important and indispensable ingredient in the internationalisation process.

The internationalisation of higher education is a dynamic process, continuously shaped and reshaped by the international context in which it occurs. As this context changes, so do the purpose, goals, meanings, and strategies of internationalisation. Over the past half century, the world has changed dramatically as a result of the demise of colonial hegemonies, the end of the Cold War, the rise of new economic powers, and new regional alliances(IAU,2012). Globalisation is now the most important contextual factor shaping the internationalisationof higher education. Globalisation is characterised by interdependence among nations and manifested in the economic, political, social, cultural, and knowledge spheres. Central toglobalisation are the increased mobility of goods, services, and people and the accelerating use of information and communication technologies to bridge time and space in unprecedented ways and at continually decreasing costs(IAU,2012). Institutions, countries and regions in different parts of the world and at different times pursue a variety of goals and participate in diverse ways in the higher education internationalisation process. Examples, such as Africa under colonial rule, where access tohigher education meant travelling abroad to attend one of the universities of the colonial power, or more recently the Bologna Process, which is radically changing the higher education landscape in Europe through internationally coordinated reforms, illustrate howinternationalisation fulfils different purposes and brings different rewards and challenges(IAU,2012).

It is generally agreed in the literature, that internationalisation of higher

education is one of the ways countries respond to the impact of globalisation (Huang, 2002; Knight, 1999; Lemasson, 1999). Sometimes these two terms, namely, internationalisation and globalisation, are used interchangeably. Although interrelated, the terms differ in meaning, and serve different purposes. Globalisation is a relatively new concept that has come into common usage since the 1980s, and refers to the development of increasingly integrated economic, technological, political, cultural systems and relationships that transcend national borders and operate in real time (Bloland, 2005; Kellner, 2002; Marginson & Rhoades, 2005). Depending on one's philosophical or political perspective, globalisation has both positive and negative connotations. Supporters of globalisation present it as beneficial, generating fresh economic opportunities, political democratisation, cultural diversity, and the opening to an exciting new world, while its critics see it as harmful, bringing about increased domination and control by the wealthier overdeveloped countries over the poor underdeveloped countries (Kellner, 2002). Regardless of the views, global forces and processes have a major and growing impact on higher education. Globalisation has forced governments and higher education to examine their operations critically, and has presented opportunities for the sharing of ideas among institutions of the world.

The purposes of the present research are to address: perceptions, challenges of Internationalizing university culture, and addressing change and quality of its services. The paper begins with the explication of the process of internationalisation, followed by a brief review for the need for internationalisation: adapting to change and preserving quality, and examination of challenges of internationalisation.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This conceptual paper is significant because it will explore perceptions, challenges of Internationalizing university culture, and will address change and quality of its services and make recommendations for future research.

METHODOLOGY

The method used is literature review. The author has in this research made an effort to describe, summarise, evaluate and clarify literatures that are relevant to this study. According to the University of Australia library guide, in writing literature review, the reviewer aims to pass on to the readers the knowledge and ideas previously

established on a specific topic. He also tries to identify the challenges there are on the established knowledge. The literature review must be defined by a guiding concept like research objective, the problem or issue being discussed or an argumentative thesis. Based on this knowledge, the author critically analysed selected literatures that are relevant to the subject under study, extracting the important information therein and highlighting our areas of dissent.

Articles were identified that focused specifically on the internationalisation of university culture. The following search engines were used to identify relevant articles: Research Gate, Academia, JESTOR, Medline, Embase, ERIC, BEI and Google Scholar.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This conceptual paper integrates Internationalizing university culture and change and quality, which make it necessary to give a theoretical framework on appreciating change and quality. The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the literature on internationalisation of higher education and the literature on higher education associations.

INTERNATIONALIZING UNIVERSITY CULTURE IN CAMEROON

Internationalizing university culture in Cameroon has come with a great deal of imprint and challenges. With the prime objective of making Cameroon's higher institutions competitive on a global scale, the sector has sought new academic policies and programs as they join their cohorts in the realm of Internationalizing university culture. Without doubt, this has come with many nuances, but it has equally brought a face-lift for the different universities. Public universities in Cameroon, like private universities, joined the Bolognal system of education after 2007, and this marked another turning point – the introduction of the Bachelor, Master and PhD/Liscence, Master and Doctorat BMP/LMD System. In 2005, member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (CEMAC), had adopted the Bologna Process, referred to as (Bachelor, Master and PhD) BMP (by Anglophones) or (License, Master et Doctorat) LMD (by Francophones) systems. Member states (CEMAC) had signed the Libreville Declaration of February 2005 (Nnane, Titanji and Tchombe, 2009). In October 2007, the BMP/ LMD system was officially launched within Cameroon's HE system.

Certificates such as Diplome d'Etudes Generales (DEUG), the Maitrise and the Diplome d'Etudes Approfondies (DEA), for Francophones and the Post Graduate Diploma (PGD) for Anglophones, were gradually phased out (Nnane, Titanji and Tchombe, 2009). The essence was to ensure the comparability of degrees or certificates, facilitate student and staff mobility and strengthen quality and relevance of programmes. Lyonga and Endeley (2008) carried out a survey within the University of Buea, involving 118 students who were course delegates. The aim of the survey was to evaluate the extent to which students' experiences dovetailed with their expectations of the BMP process. Strengthening quality of services offered, access, equity at all levels are of strategic importance to the government of Cameroon. Increasingly, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), partly because of resource inadequacies, are being challenged to diversify their sources of funding by reducing their dependence on the government. Emerging concepts such as entrepreneurialism, accountability, good governance require new and demanding management strategies. Managing change, in a globalised knowledge economy, especially within the context of HEIs; as a kind of innovation, is likely to achieve its intended objectives only when the implementation process is closely monitored (Nnane, Titanji and Tchombe, 2009).

NEED FOR INTERNATIONALIZING UNIVERSITY CULTURE

The recent global, competitive forces have created unprecedented challenges for universities: "…the borders of universities have opened in new ways for their services and products" (Gumpor and Sporn, 1999, p. 103). Cross border education, that is, internalisation, with consequent requirements for structural and cultural adaptation, is pervasive and an inescapable reality on a world-wide basis (Gumpor and Spom,1999; Sporn, 1999). Adapting to internal change in organisations is important in meeting the realities of the community, and necessitates the need for internationalisation.

Similarly, it becomes imperative to pursue quality in the process of internationalisation, as the organisation is open to global competition, with the amazing post-industrial challenges. According to (Hayden, Thompson and Williams 2003; Chan and Dimmock, 2008) other key benefits of internationalisation include:

- diversifying and enhancing the learning environment for the benefit of domestic students, the University, and the nation;
- diversifying and enhancing the student population by attracting excellent international undergraduate and graduate students;
- ensuring that research and scholarship are informed by international, as well as national, provincial and local, considerations and issues;
- producing graduates who are internationally knowledgeable and cross-culturally sensitive;
- addressing through scholarship the increasingly interdependent nature of the world, thereby contributing to improved understanding among nations;
- generating resources to enhance other international activities;
- helping to maintain the economic, scientific and technological competitiveness, and promoting the export of educational products and services abroad; and
- raising the international profile of the university.

Generally, international education engenders the "international characteristics" fostered in students that are desirable in a global economy: international-mindedness and open-mindedness, second language competence, flexibility of thinking, tolerance and respect for others (Hayden, Thompson and Williams 2003; Chan and Dimmock, 2008).Students have an understanding of global issues; adopting academic programs and policies in institutions equally serves students as global leaders, since they have a concise comprehension of issues happening across borders. This equally presents them with an opportunity to compete in a global market and such experiences are what employers scout for currently in job markets.

INTERNATIONALIZING UNIVERSITY CULTURE

Adapting to change or pursuing quality

Adapting to change and pursuing quality education have become variables that can be manipulated as state and other private institutions battle their way in the struggle for Internationalizing university culture. Adversely, some institution seems to have lost sight of the value of education, and they concentrate on the commercialisation of programmes and scouting for students at home and abroad as they struggle to establish an international

community. This is so because the courses of different higher institutions are now marketed abroad as they target more students. To some extent, higher institutions try to adapt to technological, social and economic change. In so doing, the state and some institutions have changed academic policies and adapted curricula to meet global standards. Equally, some higher institutions lose or compromise the quality of the education they offer because they do not have adequate human resources and most managers concentrate on aspects other than quality products and services.

In our view, accepting change has exposed both the universities and the students on a global scale to competiveness with other academics and universities elsewhere. Equally, as University raise standards, they improve on the strength of their curricula, including the manner of conducting research, among others, and as such, are encouraged to do more.

Perception of Internationalizing University Culture

There is hardly any unified and universal definition of the concept of internationalisation of university culture. As such, different scholars hold different schools of thought as to what should be considered an all-inclusive definition of internationalisation of university culture. The state and other private institutions have adopted and adapted academic policies and programmes as they battle to meet international university standards. It is worthy of note that universities have two main objectives: to educate students and to generate knowledge. They play a major role in procuring the human and intellectual resources needed for fulfilling human and economic development (Green, 2005). Literature reviewed exposed shared perceptions about the concept of Internationalizing university culture in their various institutions, which included the following: teacher and student mobility, established credit and transfer systems; international student participation; curriculum change; international partnerships; mobilizing financial, human and technological resources for internationalisation; university private sector partnerships; faculty contributions to internationalisation; contribution of research to internationalisation; contribution of university development projects to internationalisation; organisational infrastructure, to name a few instances (Green, 2005). The communication of international opportunities to the university faculty and

student body is critical in internationalisation efforts; such communication could be achieved through efficient and comprehensive university web sites, group e-mail systems, and newsletters (Green, 2005). Universities with international focus will have human resources and facilities dedicated to international education and would have a campus-wide internationalisation task force. In addition, those universities would have an international administration office to follow-up on activities and disburse relevant information to their respective university communities (Green, 2005).

Institutions aggressively pursuing internationalisation must have mechanisms to financially support their faculty and student travel abroad, teaching abroad, programs for meetings and conferences, and study or establish research collaborations. In addition, universities should offer on-campus facilities and organise workshops to help faculty use technology to internationalise their courses (Green, 2005). In addition, universities should provide incentives to junior faculty staff who are not tenured and would like to pursue international collaborations early in their careers.

CHALLENGES OF INTERNATIONALIZING UNIVERSITY CULTURE IN BUEA OF CAMEROON

Following the data collected from literature, interesting findings were made, which speak to some of the problems for the most part. This is particularly the case because the content of African education is hardly relevant to its immediate community as much of what is learnt from schools is more easily applicable abroad than in Africa. In this section of the paper, we outline the challenges as observed in higher education in Buea, Cameroon, as well as those from literature. Cameron (1984) draws a distinction between adaptation and organisation development (OD). "Adaptation focuses on changes motivated by the external environment; OD focuses on changes motivated from within the organization" (p. 123). While both kinds of organisational change are germane to internationalisation, the strategic choice approach and more specifically the "strategy-structure" model (Hardy choice approach and, et al., 1983; more specifically, Peterson, and Dill, 1997; Porter, 1980), Keller (1997)in combination with a "planned change" process, focusing on the organisation's culture, provides an underpinning for the conceptual framework

that is proposed to assist in the understanding of a process of internationalisation of universities. Despite these efforts, there are still some nuances accompanying the conceptualisation of internationalisation of university culture:

- Neglect of cultural curricula.I warn against complete Africanisation of knowledge systems but advise that key components of the African heritage should be inclusive in the struggle for internationalisation. For the most part, cultural curricular has been ignored in African knowledge systems.
- Limited funding. Internationalizing university culture demands large amounts of funds to accommodate and pursue international programs that are befitting of the requisite standard. It goes without saying that it demands infrastructural and human resource facilities to establish and run such programs.
- International opportunities are mainly limited to students with financial resources. Pursuing international and/or exchange programs abroad seems only possible for a selected few as most Cameroonians cannot afford the huge tuition fees of such programs, among others.
- Commercialisation of education (societal risk). Internationalizing university culture has become a tool for marketing and propaganda. It invites more students and eventually more money for the institutions. Universities have lost their focus of educating students, but instead use institutions to make more money and enrich their coffers.

CONCLUSION

Internationalizing university culture in Africa in general, and Cameroon in particular, will not reach its transformative potential through the mindless transfer of knowledge, theories and methods from other parts of the world. This will reproduce dependency; as local universities will be training individuals who can fit better in a foreign country. It is, thus, safe to say that a university will be preparing students for emigration as most of the knowledge acquired is of little or no relevance to their present communities.

Instead, empowerment of Africans, Cameroonian youths and sustainable development require that more contextualized knowledge be produced. The power and politics of knowledge must be

analysed. It is necessary to differentiate between dominant knowledge and universal knowledge and, through this process, decolonise the African academy in global stands (such that African education is regarded for its value and what it is) of Internationalizing university culture.

Educational systems are the foundation upon which progress depends and the quality of educational systems heavily impacts the long-term political and economic success of countries. Global competitiveness encompasses educational systems, and thus highlights the importance of quality education systems. The results from the study reveal insights of the nuances in culture and systems' challenges, impact on students' and staffs' perceptions of higher education. Cameroon's higher education competitiveness is being called into question and the results of this study can in part, along with similar studies involving other educational systems, help provide direction for higher education systems.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the literature, the following two recommendations for future research are suggested:

Recommendation 1: Further research should be conducted to evaluate the rewards and challenges of Internationalizing university culture in Cameroon. Recommendation 2: Further research should be conducted to facilitate public understanding of internationalization and African métissage.

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