

**INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES:
ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES*****FASANMI Success Ayodeji**

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Abstract

In order to strengthen their international presence, universities are striving to increase their internationalisation. The world is said to have moved from being a global village to a 'global sitting room'. There is therefore the need to operate beyond the immediate environment and this may be achieved through interaction with international practices which forms the main thrust of internationalisation. This study examined issues and perspectives around internationalisation of higher education in south-western Nigerian universities. The south-western part of the country has the highest number of universities among the six geo-political zones with a total of 54 universities (7 Federal, 11 States and 36 Private Universities). The research design was descriptive survey. The sample of the study comprised 58 respondents including eight Deans, 42 Heads of Departments (HODs), six Faculty Officers (FOs) and two Student Affairs Officers (SAOs) in the two institutions. Data for the study were analysed using percentage and mean. The result showed that aggregate mean of the forms of internationalisation available at Obafemi Awolowo is 14.8 while at Osun State University it was 7.5 while the aggregate mean of the indicators showing the level of internationalisation at Obafemi Awolowo is 16.9 while at Osun State University it was 8.3. Some challenges facing the internationalisation effort of the sampled institution were identified as paucity of funds which snowballs into other issues such as unavailability of research grants, lack of space to accommodate interested visiting scholars and research collaborators, infrastructural problem, limited office spaces, unstable academic calendar caused by incessant strikes, erosion of academic culture from the universities, epileptic power supply among others. The study recommended among others that since funding is a major agenda for restructuring, there is the need for the provision of adequate funding for universities to be able to pursue and implement its internationalisation agenda.

Keywords: Internationalisation, Higher Education, Internationalisation of Higher Education.

INTRODUCTION

Higher Education is one of the forms of education acquired after secondary education (which may be a university, polytechnic or college of education) aimed at providing high level manpower training for its recipients for national development as well as self-reliance through the process of teaching, research and service. In the World Declaration on Higher Education adopted by the World Conference on Higher Education in 1998, higher education was defined as: "all types of studies, training or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent state authorities." Higher education comprises all post-secondary education, training and research guidance at education institutions such as universities that are authorized as institutions of higher education by state authorities. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have three functions in total. In addition to teaching, these are research and contributing to society also known as community service. The research and teaching functions are two sides of a coin; research makes a higher level of teaching possible and teaching, in turn, develops the human resources to do research. Recently, contributions to society have increasingly been demanded of higher education institutions. This means the higher education institutions need to have activities to ensure that accumulated knowledge is circulated directly back to society and that they do not become "ivory towers." All three functions are intimately connected when considering higher education. The goal of higher education has long been identified as the process that helps develop the whole man

physically, mentally, morally and technologically, to enable him/her function effectively in any environment in which he/she finds themselves in order to become more productive, self-fulfilling and attain self-actualisation (Aluede and Ufah, 2004). Internationalisation is an important subject that has attracted a lot of attention and discussion within higher education around the world during the last two decades. It focuses on issues of social and curricular relevance, institutional quality and prestige, national competitiveness, and innovation potential. Altbach *et al.* (2009) noted that it is not possible for higher education to opt out of the global environment as its effects are unavoidable. The task of internationalising poses a challenge to higher education leaders to strike a balance between exploring the massive global trends in higher education, as well as the internationalisation of higher education while attending effectively to the unique needs and aspirations of their institutions, local communities, and regional or national contexts. Despite the great influence of the global environment, local realities of wealth, language, academic development, and other factors all affect the extent to which institutions are motivated and able to internationalise. A widely accepted definition of internationalisation in literatures is put as a process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension in the purpose, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education (Knight, 2003). Understood as both a reaction and a companion trend to globalisation, internationalisation has long been considered the toolkit of responses available (primarily at institutional and national levels) to address the many and diverse opportunities and imperatives presented by the overwhelming forces of globalisation. Eva Egron-Polak, a former secretary-general of the International Association of Universities (IAU) noted that even though there is still no such thing as global higher

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education, internationalisation is creating a sense of 'global' in higher education. The IAU has been particularly interested in tracking how internationalisation is understood and operationalised around the world, and it has produced three reports that endeavour to capture the perspectives of higher education leaders around the world with regard to the phenomenon in the IAU Reports of 2003, 2006 and 2010. The concept and practice of internationalisation is expressed in many and varied ways which represent its key elements. These include international student and scholar mobility, cross-border educational provision, the push to achieve world-class status, language integration leading to the adoption of English language for teaching and research, research collaboration, production of globally competent graduates understanding and functioning in a complex and interconnected world. History affirms that internationalisation of African education in general (and higher education in particular) is directly related to the colonial experience of the continent. For example, the first degree awarding institution in Nigeria was the University College, Ibadan now University of Ibadan, established in 1948 as an arm of the University College of London. In the same year, the University of the Gold Coast in Ghana was also founded as an arm of the University College of London, same as the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania which opened after the nation's independence in 1961. The three countries share a common history and legacy of British colonisation. It has equally been observed that contemporary patterns of international student and staff mobility in African countries reflects its colonial past. Students and staff who go abroad for study and in visiting capacity tend to go to institutions and countries with links to their former colonialists. However, the situation is changing now as students now have considerations on where to study based on the financial implications of running programme in the different countries. Sponsors at the institutional level and parents prefer to send their staff in training and wards to countries where the tuition fee is relatively affordable. Some internationalisation activities employed in institutions across the world which are also adopted in African and Nigerian higher education institutions (HEIs) include institutional partnerships; joint research projects; inbound and outbound student, faculty, and staff mobility; the introduction of international dimensions into the curriculum; the establishment of branch campuses; and transnational virtual delivery of higher education.

The Southwestern region of the country which comprise of six states has the highest number of universities among the six geo-political zones in the country. It has a total of 54 universities (7 Federal, 11 States and 36 Private Universities). While the concentration of universities in the region is not necessarily an indication that it is ahead of other regions rather, concerns have been raised that the massification of higher education in the region is based on quest for political relevance by some state governments who sees establishment of universities as a plus to their political agenda while they fail to take into consideration the capacity of the State to sustain the institutions both now and in the nearest future. The increase in the number of private universities on the other hand may be attributed to the problem of access to the available public universities. Be that as it may, the task of internationalising is such that has become inevitable as the need to incorporate international and inter-cultural dimensions into higher education is becoming more important more than ever before in order to be able cope with emerging trends in the higher education sector.

Overview of Higher Education Internationalisation in Nigeria

The Internationalisation of Higher Education Whitepaper (und) summarised the purpose of higher education to include research which covers seeking new knowledge, higher student learning and the development of critical thought, preparation for work and the professions, development of leaders of industry, government office and public service and addressing challenges in order to contribute to the human condition. Varghese in (2008) in Antiabong (2018) described internationalisation as the imparting of knowledge, skills and values which have universal appeal and application. By implication, the curriculum becomes cross-national and intercultural and nature. The need for higher education to embrace internationalisation was emphasized by the International Association of Universities (IAU), when it says to fulfil its role effectively and maintain excellence, higher education must become far more internationalised; it must integrate an international and intercultural dimension into its teaching, research, and service functions. Alkarzon(2016) noted that the need for every college student to gain skills in understanding cross cultural issues, and the fulfillment of this goal is directly linked with the development and teaching of the curricula. Preparing future leaders and citizens for a highly interdependent world, requires a higher education system where internationalisation promotes cultural diversity and fosters intercultural understanding, respect, and tolerance among peoples. Such internationalisation of higher education contributes to building more than economically competitive and politically powerful regional blocks; it represents a commitment to international solidarity, human security and helps to build a climate of global peace. (IAU, 2003)

Over the years, the concept of internationalisation has evolved and different definitions exist, IAU adopts this: "Internationalisation of Higher Education is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. "(De Wit., Hunter., Howard., Egron-Polak, 2015). Internationalisation is seen as an effort towards modernising the university system. This is in line with the submission of German Action Committee on Education which opined that forward-looking university policy is crucial to regional development and that excellently trained graduates provide the basis for innovation and competitiveness. To this end, we must continue to modernise the university system. The growing internationalisation of universities is a key part of this." (University World News, 2018). Internationalisation is conceived as university's response to the economic, social and cultural change known as globalisation. The internationalisation of higher education is a natural result of the internationalisation of the world's material and intellectual development, and is demanded by the economic development of society. Development and competition require joint efforts to achieve the cultivation of high-level professional personnel and cooperation in scientific research to tackle key problems beyond the limits of one country. Indicators of internationalisation of higher education include but not limited to the following: student mobility, exchange programmes, staff mobility, research and Development (International collaborative research, conferences and journals), institutional linkages, academic programmes,

governance and autonomy, international presence/cross border education, regional connectivity, harmonisation, social and cultural integration, curriculum/educational programme among others. Similarly, Uche and Ahunanya (2013) identified some models of internationalisation to include international students' mobility, faculty exchange and development, research collaboration, foreign Language study, building of international perspective, international networking, distance education, locally supported education, twinning programmes, articulation programmes and agreements and international quality assurance systems. Delgado-Marque, Hurtado-Tones and Bonder (2011) identified some approaches to the understanding of internationalisation of higher education which include activity approach, competency approach, ethos approach and process approach. The activity approach has been described as the most prevalent in the incorporation of international dimension into educational activities and it determines how far the products of the system are accepted globally. The educational activities associated with the activity approach include curriculum development and exchanges, faculty exchange, technical assistance, institutional linkages, international students study abroad, networking, development projects assistance, extended campuses and academic mobility. The Competency approach covers the development of new skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in students, faculty and staff. As the emphasis on outcomes of education grows, there is increasing interest in identifying and defining global international competencies. In the ethos approach, the emphasis is on creating a culture or climate in the educational institution which promotes and supports international and intercultural initiatives. The process approach entails the integration of an international or intercultural dimension into the three core areas of higher education; teaching, research and service through a combination of a wide range of activities, policies and procedures.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- What are the existing internationalisation measures in public universities in the study area?
- What is the level of internationalisation of higher education in public universities in the study area?
- What are the challenges facing internationalisation of higher education in the study area?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design. The population consisted of all deans, heads of departments and faculty officers and student affairs officers in the two public universities in Osun State. The study sample comprised 58 respondents including eight faculty Deans, 42 Heads of Department (HODs), six Faculty Officers (FOs) and two Student Affairs Officers (SAOs) in the two public universities in Osun State. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select five Deans from Obafemi Awolowo University, (OAU), while three Deans were selected from Osun State University (UNIOSUN). In the Heads of Department category, 30 were selected from OAU and 12 from UNIOSUN using proportionate stratified sampling technique. In the administrative staff category, three Faculty Officers and one Student Affairs Officer were selected from OAU, while

four Faculty Officers and one Student Affairs Officer were selected from UNIOSUN also using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The researcher made use of two self-designed instruments to collect information from respondents. These are Assessment of Compliance with Internationalisation Process Questionnaire (ACIP-Q) and Internationalisation of Higher Education Measures Questionnaire (IMR-Q). The ACIP-Q which is an open-ended questionnaire elicited responses from Deans and Heads of Departments on the level of faculty compliance with the internationalisation process of higher education, while IMR-Q (also open ended) elicited information from Faculty Officers and Student Affairs Officers on the existing measures as well as the resources that have so far been employed in the internationalisation process of higher education in public universities in Osun State. ACIP-Q and IMR-Q were divided into two sections. Section A contained demographic information of respondent while Section B contained the questions that are supposed to be responded to by the respondents in the two categories. The instruments were validated by two experts in the Department of Educational Management, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Their reliability was also ensured at 0.89 and 0.87 respectively. The data collected in the study were statistically analysed using percentage scores and content analysis procedure were used to analyse the research questions.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the existing internationalisation measures in public universities in the study area?

To answer this Research Question, responses of Deans and Heads of Department in the two sampled institutions OAU and UNIOSUN were presented in percentages in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Forms of Internationalisation available in public universities in Osun State

S/N	Forms of Internationalisation	OAU % of respondents	UNIOSUN % of respondents
1	Research Collaboration	32 (97%)	9(81.8%)
2	Faculty Exchange and Development	16(48.5%)	6(54.5%)
3	Cooperative teaching	16(48.5%)	8(72.7%)
4	International Student Mobility	11(33.3%)	2(18.2%)
5	Academic Freedom	23(69.7%)	11(100%)
6	Branch Campus System	2(6.1%)	9(81.8%)
7	Distance Education	3(9.1%)	5(45.5%)
8	Scholarship Funding	12(36.4%)	8(72.7%)
9	On-line presence	14(42.4%)	9(81.9%)
10	Stable Internet Access	19(57.6%)	8(72%)
11	Functional Laboratories	15(45.5%)	7(63.6%)
	Aggregate Mean (x)	14.8	7.5

Table 1 showed eleven forms of internationalisation. The aggregate mean of the forms of internationalisation available at Obafemi Awolowo is 14.8 while at Osun State University it was 7.5. Hence, more measures of internationalization were found to be in place in Obafemi Awolowo University than in Osun State University.

Research Question 2: What is the level of internationalisation of higher education in public universities in the study area?

To answer Research Question2, questions were raised on key indicators of internationalisation as available with a view to determining the level of internationalisation in the two sampled institutions.

Table 2. Indicators of Internationalisation in public universities in Osun State

S/N	Indicators	OAU % of respondents	UNIOSUN % of respondents
(i)	Cross campus research collaboration	20(60.6%) {Medium}	11(100%) {High}
(ii)	Joint research activities with foreign universities	20(60.6%) {Medium}	6(54.5%) {Low}
(iii)	Electronic Learning (E-Learning)	15(45.5%) {Low}	7(63.6%) {Medium}
(iv)	Open Education Resource	1(3.0%) {Low}	1(9.1%) {Low}
(v)	Skill acquisition and Training	20(60.6%) {Medium}	11(100%) {High}
(vi)	Stable Academic Calendar	2(6.1%) {Low}	11(100%) {High}
(vii)	Electronic Application/Registration	26(78.8%) {High}	9(81.8%) {High}
(viii)	Internet Access (for staff & student)	30(90.9%) {High}	10(90.9%) {High}
(ix)	Quality basic and applied researches	21(63.6%) {Medium}	10(90.9%) {High}
(x)	Communication linkage	17(51.5%) {Low}	7(63.6%) {Medium}
(xi)	Publication in Nature & Science	14(42.4%) {Low}	8(72.7%) {High}
	Aggregate (Mean)	16.90	8.27

Field work, 2017

In determining the level, the various responses indicated were expressed in percentages and categorisation was made into High, Medium and Low using these benchmarks: 70% - 100% - High; 50% - 69% - Medium; 0% - 49% - Low.

The aggregate mean of the indicators showing the level of internationalization at Obafemi Awolowo is 16.9 while at Osun State University it was 8.27. Hence, it was found that Obafemi Awolowo University has a higher level of internationalisation than Osun State University.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges facing internationalisation of higher education in the study area?

Content analysis procedure was used to present the responses of respondents on the challenges facing internationalisation of higher education in the sampled institutions. The respondents were able to give firsthand information on the challenges facing internationalisation efforts and activities in their different areas of work. Respondents in this category include Deans, Heads of Department, Faculty Officers and Students Affairs Officers. The identified problems are presented directly as provided in the open-ended questionnaires filled by the respondents using the content analysis procedure.

“Paucity of Fund (most prominent according to this respondent), Lack of adequate Research Equipment, Unstable Power (Electricity) Supply, Unstable University Academic Calendar, Irregular Supply of Portable Water, Lack of Proper Maintenance Culture for Physical Infrastructures especially buildings, Obsolete teaching and research facilities.”

“Staff capacity vis-à-vis schedule still remains inadequate, need to improve on methodology of selecting better intake, need to get student better focussed from onset and promote further and deeper specialisation among faculty members.”

“Accessing International University Exchange Programmes, Paucity of relevant information, teaching overload affecting attention for research.”

“A major challenge is that the flow of human resource development is unidirectional from our Department to other universities or countries. There is need for us to be able to attract them to our universities. A key challenge in this regard is fund.”

“Lack of adequate funds has always hindered the activities of the Department in the area of Research Collaboration, Poor infrastructure and space has prevented the Department from taking requests of scholars requesting for postdoctoral

positions in the Department, Lack of adequate manpower hindered the possibility of starting distance education programmes.”

Poor outlet for research activities/collaboration, Inadequate linkages with other institutions, Poor Communication network, Inadequate funding, Stalled exchange programmes for staff and students, No transfer of technology”

“Low access to funding for Research purposes, Unstable Academic Calendar, Inability to retain most of the best brains in the class for postgraduate work locally”

“There is no adequate funding to enable foreign scholars/attract international scholars as Visiting Professors or Research Collaborators, there is dearth of research grants, and this has hindered cross fertilisation of ideas, research issue and knowledge transfer beyond local content.”

E-leaning facilities/teaching has not been fully implemented despite various capacity building to kick start the programme. This has not made the teaching-learning process to be effective.”

Finance, Diversion of time due to staff engagement in in-training and development programmes, Students’ unwillingness to learn, Inadequacy of learning materials due to financial constraints”

“Tardiness in responding to request and enquiries, Funding, Uncooperative attitude on the part of some members of staff, Communication gap, Lethargy.”

One of the respondents from the state-owned university sampled noted that the Non-residential campus system being operated in the university makes it difficult to monitor the students after normal classroom hours, Inefficient internet facilities that slow down the administrative system, Electricity shortage affects life on Campus.”

A Students Affairs Officer in one of the sampled institutions provided responses as follows: *“Some of the challenges we are facing as a division in the area of work study is inadequate fund. The Division would have loved to assist more indigent students if we are able to get more funds and corporate bodies that are willing to give scholarships to the students; If there is improvement in availability of funds, the Division would like to extend the coverage of internet access to enable students have access on-line journals for their final year thesis”*

The content analysis of responses from Deans, Heads of Department, Faculty Officers and Student Affairs showed that funding problem and infrastructural inadequacy are prominent challenges facing the internationalisation efforts of universities in the sampled institutions which is likely to be facing all other universities across the nation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Some peculiar challenges identified by virtually all the respondents were funding problem, infrastructural decay and workload on academics leaving them with little or no time for internationalisation. This is in line with the submission of Robert-Okah (2013) who noted that paucity of funds allocated to the education sector in the national budget has become a hydra-headed monster to growth and development of universities in Nigeria. He also lamented the increasing deplorable state of the university's carrying capacity regulation which has placed so much pressure on the available infrastructures thus leading to dilapidation. The problem of poor internet system identified in this study was also noted in Robert-Okah(2013) when he noted that universities in Nigeria lack functional local and wide area networks and may therefore not be part of those dreaming of internationalisation. He advanced that information-seeking activities of internationalised institutions of learning can be rewarding and enjoyable with good and fast local and wireless internet facilities. Furthermore, Adefuye (2013) noted that there is the possibility of universities copying intervention innovations, not buoyed by having dedicated and qualified staff-a situation alleged to have combined to place the best Nigerian university behind the top sixteen universities in Africa (Adefuye, 2012). Adefuye (2012) further noted that such intervention or the so-called innovations where not matched with knowledgeable and dedicated staff tend to place the university on a very slow growth ladder. He noted that this perhaps might have accounted for the poor ratings given to higher institutions in Nigeria, in Africa and the whole world to this. Robert-Okah (2013) equally corroborated the findings of this study on inadequacy of infrastructures and educational support facilities when he noted that resources needed to produce hugely sophisticated manpower in universities are either non-existent or grossly inadequate. Despite the limitations, Antiabong (2018) noted that internationalisation of education is practicable in Nigeria but should be progressively approached with well-articulated and clearly defined policies for progressive implementation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It was found in this study that public universities in Osun State employed various internationalisation measures (international student mobility, faculty exchange and development, research collaboration, cooperative teaching, cross campus research collaboration, foreign language study, Open Education Resources, building international perspectives, international networks, distance education, locally supported distance education, twinning programmes, articulation programmes, branch campuses, franchising agreements and international quality assurance systems)at varying extents. However, it was discovered that there are certain limitations in the actualisation of these measures. Prominent among these limitations as found out in the study is paucity of funds which snowballs into other issues such as unavailability of research grants, lack of space

to accommodate interested visiting scholars and research collaborators, infrastructural problem, limited office spaces. Others include unstable academic calendar caused by incessant strikes by labour union and student crisis, erosion of academic culture from the University, epileptic power supply among others. Considering the fact that funding is central to the actualisation of the internationalisation efforts, the study concludes that it is important that funding of public universities should form the priority of government at both state and federal level. On its own part, the management of public universities is expected to be prudent and judicious in the use of available funds. Funds made available to universities in form of research support and special intervention funds from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) must be judiciously use and well accounted for while research funds and grants must be accessible to deserving researchers. This will help to facilitate quality research and knowledge as well as technology transfer. In providing recommendations based on the findings of the study, it was noted that funding is always a big agenda for restructuring. Hence capital base of any institution and sources of both internally and externally generated fund options according to Onyene (2000) in Robert-Okah (2014) affects the number of positions created in the course of structuring for internationalisation. Universities should be adequately funded. At least, the UNESCO standard of 26% annual national budget should be strictly adhered to if the deplorable state of equipments, facilities and infrastructure can be stemmed. Furthermore, to be able to internationalise the admission into Nigerian universities, a one-time, online examination programme of global standard should be introduced to encourage foreigners access Nigerian universities with the minimum required qualification. The effect of incessant closure of Nigerian universities can be reduced if formal agreements are entered into for twinning model with foreign universities among Massive Open On-line courses (MOOCs) as advocated by the National Universities Commission Guidelines (2010) such that as students are at home because of closure, they can be studying and running the programmes of the twin universities. However, the best is avoidance of closures such that unions devise alternative strategies to make demand on government. The corona virus pandemic has however changed the trend of things as most institutions now run hybrid mode of learning which entails both physical and online learning. The need for cross campus research collaboration and joint research activities with foreign universities which is expected to help in fostering global standard research processes. Communication linkage is a critical factor in the internationalisation of higher education as that opens every institution to the larger audience and the wider world. There is therefore the need for the re- designing of the communication lines. Online and distance learning will play a major role here as it will help allow for participation of foreigners both students and staff.

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