GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: DEVELOPING NIGERIAN STUDENTS THROUGH CROSS-CULTURAL CONTACT

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ABSTRACT

This paper x-rays how the drive to acquire international education has developed our international students who travel in their numbers across the border to acquire global knowledge. Developing countries across the world has tactically engaged in sending their students to developed countries with the aim of acquiring a truly international education that will attend to their all round development. Meanwhile as researches have shown, assessing how these teeming populations of students are developing has been difficult. Thus, the paper has examined the interest in foreign education and student's development and realised that the need to have a foreign degree is chief among the reasons for Nigerian students overseas education sojourn. The paper has equally examined how the cross-cultural contact occurring from international education has shaped the developmental trajectories of our students. Likewise, how important the Western education that is mostly sought by Nigerian students has contributed to the development of the developing countries is also considered in this paper. The paper concludes by considering the benefits in terms of development that sojourners from developing countries get from engaging in foreign education.

Keywords: Globalisation, development, international, education and cross-cultural

Introduction

The interest of this paper is on globalisation of education as a transformative tool and one that should drive human development than of politics, economy, power and Western hegemony as they have manifested themselves in education over the years as supported in the works of Tikly (2001). The effect of such colony and marginal domination has occupied the canon of globalisation and understanding of education in this period.

The course of globalisation on education as considered in this paper is to examine the global fuse around the world and education as one of a change process with special interest on international students and how they are being affected by the current polarisation of nations that has resulted in many people wanting global education. Just as Marginson (1999, p. 19) opined, "Education has become a primary medium of globalization, and an incubator of its agents". In a broader sense, education being an incubator of its agent needs to be examined to understand how it impact on the massive population of people engaging in its process. The study of international education and its impact on the lives of foreign students engaging in it is one way of understanding whether education in the globalised world incubates its participants in developing them and giving them global identities for a sustainable future. This is because, looking at globalisation from the global economy point of view which characterise most studies on globalisation is narrow and does not help us to understand and describe the complexities of globalisation as supported in the works of Burbules and Torres (2000).

Various accounts of globalisation and education like; hyperglobalist, sceptical and the transformationalist approach have contributed to the understanding of the nature of globalisation and education. With regards to the transformationalist approach, their understanding of the globalisation and education as Tikly (2001) have noted, implies that the present globalisation is one of contradictions. The proponents of this perspective argue that, although globalisation has resulted in integration of people around the world, some areas of the economy, politics and culture, it has resulted in stratification whereby societies and communities are marginalised by others (Tikly, 2001). The resultant effect of such marginalisation is what we see today in the world where even after colonisation some countries or societies still present their own education as higher than those of others as evident in the practices of highly industrialised developed societies towards the developing postcolonial societies.

Furthermore, a review of Held et al's work by Badie (2000) suggests that globalisation cuts through the dividing walls erected formerly between domestic and international affairs. The author further argued that globalisation divides this wall without any prior commitment of individuals and thus has the ability to enforce its rules upon the other actors. This could be the reason why we see many globalisation agents like the students from developing societies being forced out by the educational trajectories in their home countries to leave their own territories for those of the Western nations and preferring the Western pedagogy.

Meanwhile, the above discussion is beyond the scope of this review as we are looking at globalisation and education from the aspect of a process that should be developing people. In their views, Hall (1992) and Hoogvelt (1997) who contributed to the transformationalist approach to globalisation and education echoed that the migration of people around the world owing to globalisation has transformed individuals and group identities and created new ethnicities. Furthermore, Tikly (2001) added that the transformation process is not fixed and essentialised but that these new forms of cultural identity are contingent and fluid. In essence, transformation of people's identities and change is part of the claims global education has made in terms of human development.

Globalization has increased global chaos, people need to negotiate boundaries to adapt to the accompanying changes and educational as a globalisation processes needs to foster these changes. For the past few decades, there have been massive movement of students across cultures. Such massive movement owing to globalisation have seen an exponential growth in the number of students travelling to the United Kingdom and other Western countries for further studies. The outcome of such globalisation process has led us to believe that meeting people from a variety of other cultures have increased in varying ways. In effect, people are experiencing other cultures more than before and people have also benefited from such travels in different ways. This could be equally seen as a developmental journey to discovering the global self.

This review is very crucial at this point where human contact has increased. This is because the current change in the system around the world has impacted greatly on the way people evolve and this process also involves international educations of students. Therefore we need an understanding of this process of human development to enrich our knowledge on how societies and people can benefit from the ongoing changes around the world called globalisation. Suffice to say that the resultant effect of this increased human contact has also impacted on human behaviours across the globe because as Burbules and Torres (2000) argued, human beings in this era of massive movement has to constantly redefine themselves in the present world that is fast developing.

Furthermore, the increase in contact and migration of people across the world has been argued to be partly because of the increase in technology and communication (Ishinger, 2008 cited in Hwang and Wang 2008). Technology and communication are however the products of globalisation which also has contributed to the current increase in human contact. This of course is the focus of the actors and nations fuelling the current globalisation process. However, this growth in global interaction has equally seen internationalization of higher education grossly on the fore front. This means that more students are travelling abroad now to study

than before. Emphasizing on how globalization has touched people's lives than before, Herman and Dimaggio (2007, p.31) has increased our understanding of globalisation thus:

"Globalisation has been the result of increasing demographic, economic, ecological, political, and military interconnections on a global scale, cosmopolitanism are becoming an aspect of the everyday life of people in many parts of the world. Educational contacts crossing the borders of nationalities; tourism as the biggest industry in the world; the daily use of the Internet by adults, adolescents, and children; business contacts with people on the other side of the world; and intensive communication between diasporas and homelands illustrate that never in the history of humankind have global connections had such a broad reach and deep impact on the selves and identities of an increasing number of people"....(Herman and Dimaggio, 2007).

Given the wider implications which include the gains and the negative effects of globalisation, the world and indeed global education should help shape and develop international students who are leaders of tomorrow that will face the challenges of the future world full of complexities, chaos and uncertainties. This should be achieved if education is to play a lead role in making the world a better place for humans to inhabit.

The nature of global education and cross cultural contact

For international educators, research reveals that their interest is moving away towards financial gains. There is of course fears that the move of the university from a service profile to a market profile has caused significant concern and dilemmas for academics and university policy makers. This shift in focus as argued by the researcher is a situation to worry educators and parents. Similarly De Vita and Case (2003) said that international students business and the internationalization of higher education is being driven my marketization. The authors argue that this process is a discourse that has prevailed in higher education over the past couple of decades (De Vita and Case, 2003).

We should be concerned on how developing the students and helping them realize their personal potentials, goals and growth with adequate support will not conflict with the current shift in motivation by educational providers recruiting foreign students. Barron, Gourlay and Gannon-Leary (2010) informed that it is tacitly accepted that the true motivation at a senior level is likely to be primarily financial when it comes to the rationale underscoring internationalisation of higher education in the UK and Australia. However, the sending countries expect a transformation, change, growth and development both academically and morally by their students whom they send to study abroad. Meanwhile, how this is achieved need to be critically examined.

The exodus of Nigerian Students for Western education

Nigerian student's number in Western universities is growing owing to globalisation which also has seen other countries in the world sending their students for overseas programme. UK also appears to be the preferred destination for students from Nigeria (Amanda and Sung 2011). Available information showed that large number of students from Nigeria criss-cross the border to study in the UK.

Nigerian students studying in the UK have come from a poor and lowly rated country in terms of education standard (British Council, 2011). Gill (2008) informed that British Council's old research predicted a 30,000 increase of Nigeria students in the UK universities by 2015. This has already been achieved. Part of that findings made in the research by the British Council reported that the number of Nigerian students in UK universities grew by 115% from 2004- 2010(British Council, 2011). Classified as likely to remain "substandard by the British Council is the quality of Nigerian degrees, which further explains why Nigerian students has continued to sojourn to study in the UK. The growth in the number of Nigerian students studying in the UK has been attributed to a number of determinants like the bilateral relationship between Nigeria and the UK (British Council, 2011). Also as Russell (2005, p.66) noticed, the UK is chosen primarily for its "educational standard and its recognized qualifications worldwide".

Meanwhile, suffice to point out that apart from globalization that has increased contacts among people across the universe, the driving force behind the Nigerian student's influx to Western countries for their studies is partly because of the poor educational standard of the country. In attempt to tackle the poor standard of education in the country, the Nigerian government both state, federal, and individuals engage in sending students abroad to acquire the Western education and return to change and improve their home system. However, this is a measure many do not support as a way of tackling the poor education system in Nigeria as they advocate that improving the standard of Nigerian universities and encouraging moral, ethical and sustainable behaviours among her education elites was far more beneficial.

Nigeria is a country rich with natural and mineral resources with crude oil as her major income driver. The proceeds from crude oil as many argue are not used for the development of other sectors like the education sector. The Nigerian education system as Oyedeji (2011) argued has not been its best because of poor governance, general unconducive learning environment among other factors. Education in Nigeria has thus not been a better choice for students who have other choices including studying overseas. Likewise, corruption which has affected the universities in Nigeria in producing quality graduates, account among the reasons why the wealthy Nigerians send their children to study overseas.

A study by Gbagolo (2011, p.34) shows that the reason for malpractices and poor standard of education in Nigerian schools include: "(i) Immorality in the society, inadequate supervision of teachers by inspectors and high enrolment fees. (ii) Tying of promotion of teachers to success of candidates in public examinations. (iii) The desire of our students and parents for success at all cost and poor teaching in schools. (iv) Absence of guidance and counseling services in schools. (v) Over-emphasis on examinations and certificate and constant closure of schools. (vi) Overcrowding in the school, for example 1 teacher to 83–100 students during exams and (vii) Parental contributions, for example, some parents pay for live papers and hire people to sit for examination on behalf of their wards" (Gbagolo 2011, p. 37). The above mentioned reason by Gbagolo are obvious though not exhaustive the situation of the Nigerian education.

Similarly, commenting on the poor educational system in Nigeria, Deji-Folutile, (2012) quoted professor Tomori as describing the Nigerian education system thus:

"There is no way the current standard of education in Nigeria can deliver the quality education most Nigerians yearn for. But the point is most Nigerians yearn for quality education, but are not prepared to work for it, we are not ready to make the required sacrifice, or feed the education system with the necessary input – funding, high class teachers, committed and hardworking students, and parents who cherish honour, and live a life of integrity and uprightness. Therefore Nigeria is deservedly reaping the quality of education she deserves – a dysfunctional education for a dissolute society. We are reaping out of our education the corruption, dishonesty, exploitation, fraudulence, treachery, apathy, carelessness, and malpractices that we have entrenched in the system. And we are reaping with compound interest"

Several issues confront the Nigerian academic system because the problems facing them are caused by all the stakeholders involved in the academic process. Thus, the government, the teachers, parents and the students all contribute to the falling standard in the Nigerian education system.

Academic activities in Nigeria have been affected by conflicts which has characterized the Nigerian university system (Ayedemi and Ademilua, 2012). The authors said that such conflicts in the Nigerian universities have gradually but steadily disrupted the academic activities of the country. Such conflicts differ in levels; teachers and government, students and teachers, cultism and other student to students' causes. These uncertainties has been among the reasons why parents who can afford to send their children overseas do not think twice but do so. As the studies by Ayedemi and Ademilua cited above revealed, the conflicts that has contributed more to the gradual collapse of the Nigerian university education standard are those that arise between the academic staff and the university authorities.

The academic staffs in Nigerian universities have continuously embarked on an indefinite strike action when they disagree with the university authorities or the federal government and this has left many students at home and for a longer period before completing their studies (Ayedemi and Ademilua, 2012). For this reason alone, some students have dropped out of the universities without completing their programmes and this has ultimately affected the rating of Nigerian universities across the world. This is also among the reasons why Nigeria students are sojourning abroad.

The educational system of Nigeria is seen as been of low standard, just as USAID (2012) reports that the quality of basic education in Nigeria is extremely poor, leading to low demand and unacceptably low academic performance in particular. Owing to this continuous poor rating by international organisations, Nigerian students prefer to sojourn abroad to study and the Western countries' universities is among their preferred destinations.

Furthermore, the poor quality of education offered in Nigerian universities that has seen many students preferring overseas for their studies as Barbara (1999) opined, is because of government corruption and neglect on Nigerian universities. The author argues that the military government that brutally ruled Nigeria for 15 years had no major concern in the development of education in the country which further eroded quality education of Nigeria. The search for quality education since then has been a factor that has driven many Nigerians abroad to study with UK, USA, Asia and America as their major host.

On the part of the students, there has been a long history of cultism in Nigerian universities where students belong to confraternities to fight themselves and intimidate their lecturers. Barbara (1999) noted that the cult groups in Nigerian universities have been deadly in their operations and have been in existence in Nigerian universities for decades. Cultism is one among the uncontrollable vices in Nigerian universities that has claimed many lives of both innocent students and students who are members of those cult groups. They perpetrate violence and killings that sometimes result in government closure of the universities involved. The closure of those universities invariably affects the innocent students' studies and this is among the reasons why the Nigerian universities are dwindling in growth and standard. These groups have in many ways contributed to the worries of parents who send their children to the universities. It is serious that the cult group activities that have continuously claimed students' lives has also disrupted academic calendars and sometimes lead to the closure of some universities by authorities. Because of this terrible experience that students have, parents nonetheless with the feeling of insecurity send their children abroad to study both to save their lives and to prevent them from joining the confraternity cult groups that exist in Nigerian universities.

It is the expectations and hope of sending parents in Nigeria that the UK and such other foreign countries will be more secured for their children to study and will guarantee the completion of their programme at the right time. The parents and sponsors of Nigerian students overseas have the hope that studying in the abroad will help transform and develop their students positively.

Since the falling education standard in Nigeria is caused by unethical practices among academics, students, parents and government stakeholders, there is also an expectation that studying abroad will impact on the behaviour and lives of the students that are sponsored to study abroad. A change in worldview which moves away from personal selfish interest to a more holistic, ethical and society focused interest are the changes expected from the students when they return to Nigeria. The contributions of these students on return are expected to help the sending country tackle the educational problems in the Nigerian educational systems. These among other expectations are the reasons why parents and government sponsor their children and students to overseas universities in different parts of the world.

Importance of overseas education to developing countries

Students travelling abroad for studies have become more pronounced alongside other group of travellers. It is equally seen as being encouraged by globalisation and the increase in the development of technology around the developed world. Study abroad has emerged as a national priority (Lewin, 2009) cited in Tarrant et al (2011). Therefore, countries around the world engage their students in various levels of study to acquire knowledge, skills and develop themselves. Acquiring global consciousness could also be the reasons for their travels to enable them learn and acquire the skills to face the challenges in the education, economic, social, political and the general growth of their national society.

Sandhu (1994) informed that the tradition of moving abroad to study and for knowledge acquisition is as old as learning itself. Therefore, knowledge acquisition and education has long been seen as a reason why people tend to move abroad and one that is required for national and international communities' growth. Historically, Ward et al (2001) noted that there have been early biblical references of travelling scholars with intercultural education tracing back to the 272-22 BC. The migration of students overseas to different part of the world since then has been significantly on the increase and the present century when the world have become a global common place, the business of overseas education has flourished. In effect, with such long history of overseas studies as Ward et al noted, it becomes important to analyse how such travels contribute to human development, and how the aims of such overseas travel by scholars has been met.

Ward et al (2001) also opined that the early reasons for international educations are rooted in social, economic and political motives and objectives of the early rulers, public figures and government of countries who initiated international education programmes and provided civic and financial support to justify their initiatives (Ward et al 2001). It could therefore be that those early sponsors of overseas education had perceived that there are bound to be some benefits from international education. However, whether education abroad takes care of the experiences of the individuals they educate or not is something to worry about in this present era where people are more in contact with each other across the world.

Developing countries with low standard of education compared to their Western developed counterparts engage their students to study abroad through various scholarship schemes and personal sponsorships. The perceived goal is that overseas experiences of these students will shape their attitude and behaviour. As Tarry (2011) submitted in a study, countries like Thailand in their effort to increase their knowledge based economy engage in government policies and programmes which encourage students to travel abroad to study. One of such strategies is their government scholarship which has seen some of their students in the United Kingdom. The same is the case for other countries in Africa and other such developing countries across the world.

As Harrison (2012) argued, the notion of being tutored in English, the perception that such education offers high quality qualifications and the global recognition of such degrees from Anglophone countries accounts for the increase in international students' migration to these countries. Therefore, apart from giving the students a truly international identity, the search for the Western precious academic qualifications and degrees has been major among the motivations to study outside Nigeria. Webb et al (2000) and Gray et al (2002) cited in Baskalis and Joiner (2004) added that studying abroad provides an avenue for training people with openness to change. Thus, one of the perceived benefits of studying in developed Western countries is to acquire this characteristics way of thinking, feeling and behaving which otherwise means a development in their psychological, social, spiritual and cognitive functions.

Sojourners who particularly travel to well-developed countries overseas to study have been recognised and documented as a career asset to their home countries (Hwang &Wang, 2011). The recognition of scholars, who travel abroad for their studies as career assets by developing communities, may imply that more international students will be seen travelling abroad to become such useful assets. In another contribution,

Bash (2009) posited that scholars who travel abroad and acquire foreign degrees, has obviously constituted item of currency which can be traded cross-nationally. The implication is that the students are expected to make meaningful contributions to the development of their societies after their studies overseas. This further suggests that it is important that scholars evaluate how these students have been developing in line with the goal of overseas education sojourn.

There abound other perceived benefits of studying abroad and such travels have been motivated by lots of factors. For instance, Maringe and Carter (2006) cited in Goel et al (2010) in their research with African students in two UK universities on the motivation for their coming abroad for study, made some discoveries about these students' motives of sojourning to the UK. In that study, the authors found and concluded from their focus group with these students, that African students sojourn to study in England on the promise of getting a truly international higher education experience. Thus, it is very important that the overseas educational processes should provide these experiences that are considered truly international by the senders of the students abroad. What is truly international however, is not clear but it may be viewed as something geared towards giving the students the opportunity to develop skills that will enable them compete with the rest international communities.

The employability of students who study abroad increases especially the developing countries' students who study in developed countries. This view has been supported in the works of Bakalis and Joiner (2004). The authors are of the view that the international students get trainings that enhance their employability and also gain important life skills. It is of course true that overseas education increases employability, especially from the developed countries where the standard of education is considered to be high. In Nigeria for example, the possession of UK or American degree gives one an edge in getting employment. Thus, this also account for the benefits and why international students travelling broad seem to be more visible among students from developing societies.

For students from developing countries, their interest and motivation for travelling abroad may not be far from acquiring knowledge for their society's development. This fact has also been supported by the submissions of Hanboyan and Bryan (1995) who argued that often, students from developing countries spend time in educational institutions of relatively more developed countries. The reason being that, upon returning home, they can make enriching contribution to their economy, health care system, social conditions, and technology of their countries. It is also believed that the students would increase in self-reflective thought, develop self-confidence and overall personal wellbeing as supported in the work of Kitsantas (2004). Developing self-reflective thought from my view is to have an ethical worldview and conscience when dealing with others. In another view, Volet and Ang (1998) argued that the main aim of global education is to produce global citizens. The idea is to strengthen intercultural contact among societies and to improve on the global consciousness of the student travellers through such foreign educational programmes.

Research on international students befits of studying abroad has increased as Zhou et al (2008), also noted that as these group of travellers are increasing, so is research on their experience growing. For developing nations like Africa, the early conception from many pre-colonial and early colonial writers about Africa portrayed Africa as a dark continent devoid of advanced centres of learning worthy of emulation by others. Thus, it is also the reason why students from these parts of the world have been moving to developed Western countries in pursuit of quality education and to develop themselves. Another view by Gill (2007) suggest that students travel abroad as a process of gaining intercultural learning, has the potential to bring about profound changes in them. It is also Gill's opinion that the learning experience of the overseas students are transformed, their self-knowledge, awareness of others, values and worldview will change from studying abroad (Gill, 2007).

Unstable educational system in some developing countries like the case of Nigeria presented earlier is chief among the reason why students go abroad to study. Coughlan (2011) informed that research has shown that

one among the reasons why students from developing countries travel abroad is because of shortage of high quality degree courses at home. Citing China as an example, the author equally submitted that Rahul Choudaha an associate director of the New York-based World Education Service informed that the pressure to get an overseas degree for chasing jobs account for the surge of international students in Western countries (Coughlan, 2011). The point stressed here is that chasing a job at home as pointed out earlier with an overseas degree for the developing countries has more prospects than with a home acquired degree. Nigeria for instance is a good example of a country in Africa that attaches preferences to Western degrees.

Furthermore, Coughlan (2011), quoted Thandika Mkandawire, professor of African Development at the London School of Economics, as saying that "African universities are still trying to recover from a loss of funding that began in the 1980s, when resources were switched to primary education". This lack of attention on the universities contributed to the downfall of the educational system in this part of the world. Mkandawire, highlighted that African Universities missed out of the entire circle of growth while other parts of the world invested hugely in higher education, "Once you destroy a university, it's very difficult to rebuild," he says (Coughlan, 2011).

Conclusions

Researches on international students have identified some benefits that students who travel abroad may have which could give them an edge over those who had no such experiences. Travelling abroad for overseas studies as Kitsantas (2004) informed, increases the expectations by the students that they will develop cross-cultural effectiveness and cross cultural competences. Therefore, studying abroad may avail the international students the opportunity to experience other cultures and learn from them. Gaining intercultural learning and becoming cross-culturally competent occupies the sojourners motives when considering overseas education. Globalization has been seen as the agent for international education business and the foreign students from developing countries have gained from participating in foreign education. It is also on record that such international learning experiences will give the students the opportunity of becoming global citizens. The students who travel abroad enjoy the leisure of overseas travel, have contacts with new people, and have a variety of dynamic experience from such travels. Conclusively, it must be pointed out that measuring these outcomes has been a problem that researchers are yet to surmount.

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