Internationalization as a Concept in Teacher Education and Training: Benefits, Strategies and Challenges

Benard O. Nyatuka[*]   Masinde Muliro University of Science & Technology, P.O Box 190-50100, Kakamega, Kenya

Ruth J. Songok   Masinde Muliro University of Science & Technology, P.O Box 190-50100, Kakamega, Kenya

Eric N. Maangi   University of Kabianga, P.O. Box 2030-20200, Kericho, Kenya

Abstract: In spite of the huge impact that internationalization as a concept has on the education sector, teacher education and training inclusive, very few academics and policy makers embark on interrogating its nuances, evolution and implications. Research demonstrates that if faculty members have few international connections, they are unlikely to convey to their students that these are necessary and expected, a situation that makes the next generation to develop even fewer ties to international peers. Similarly, although it is generally assumed that internationalization is a positive thing, there is little research conducted on the attendant challenges and drawbacks. In this paper therefore, the meaning and aspects of internationalization, with respect to teacher education and training are explored and so are the relevant strategies both at home and abroad. Furthermore, the paper focuses on the benefits and challenges associated with internationalization of teacher education and training. Some possible intervention measures to improve on the effectiveness of internationalization of teacher education and training are presented as well.

Keywords: Benefits; Challenges; Internationalization; Strategies; Teacher education and training

1. Introduction

The concept of internationalization is considered to refer to a variety of things to different people. Given this scenario, there is confusion as to what it really means. Knight (2004) and Dzvimbo (2011) attribute this scenario to the many factors that are affecting internationalization both within and without the various sectors, education included. For instance, it is used to refer to a series of international activities like academic mobility for students and learners; international linkages, partnerships, projects, academic programmes as well as research initiatives. Yet to many others, it refers to the inclusion of an international, intercultural, and/or global dimension into the curriculum, including the teaching-learning process.

According to Romaniuk (2014), internationalization of education focuses on such issues as student admission procedures; form of instruction (traditional, blended and on-line); teaching staff, curriculum development and quality assurance; promotional efforts; accommodation provision; language policy; resources (library and other facilities); financial and organizational burden versus benefits; fees charged and scholarships offered; and wider cultural implications. As per the National Communication Association (2014) and Chang'ach (2013), internationalization involves taking the rest of the world seriously, not only one's home country, and it may be considered as being the formal term for thinking globally before acting locally. Thus it requires knowing enough about the larger world to be able to act appropriately in a particular context and place. And, since it applies to all domains and contexts, it is relevant for all citizens of all countries.

On their part, Altbach and Knight (2007), hold that internationalization encompasses the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions to improve the quality of education, boost international participation, cooperation, competetiveness, knowledge and language acquisition and generate income through the recruitment of international students. It is worth observing that internationalization is also about relating to the diversity of cultures that exist within countries, communities and institutions. According to Soderqvist (2002), internationalization leads to inclusion of an international dimension in all aspects of its holistic management in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to achieve the desired competencies.

According to Crosling et al. (2008), internationalization activities should be carefully planned, well-resourced and have the involvement as well as support of all key stakeholders. This requires improved communication between institutional managers and staff or faculty. It is crucial that governments and individual institutions formulate goals and strategies that should be quantified in order to measure performance. Particularly, teacher training marketing to international students should emphasize the key strengths and unique features of the national education system, individual institutions and attractions in the country.

*Corresponding Author

Teaching international content, that is, teaching students about other parts of the world is one of the major aspects of internationalization (National Communication Association, 2014). This can take the form of either area studies, teaching students to speak, read and understand various foreign languages or internationalization of course content. Bringing in relevant examples from other countries is particularly considered a good way to show how we truly live in a global village. A convenient way to integrate international content into a course is to collaborate with a faculty member in another country, creating joint student projects so that students learn about another culture through working with members of that group. Accordingly, integrating international content into individual courses is thought to be far easier than convincing students to take a sequence of area studies, and therefore a more frequent variation.

Another aspect of internationalization involves encouraging and facilitating both faculty and student exchanges. Sometimes institution-to-institution exchange agreements facilitate the movement of faculty. One distinct advantage for students who study abroad lies in the connections they make with locals (National Communication Association, 2014). For graduate students, this can result in significantly enlarged research opportunities. Accordingly, many international universities offer graduate or post-doctoral fellowships as a way to bring scholars from other countries and their knowledge of other research traditions to their campuses. It is important to note however, that short international visits do not improve students' ability to manage cultural differences. In worse scenario, they may even be harmful.

Other aspects of internationalizing teacher education and training programmes include participating in international research and integrating colleagues, particularly scholars into a conference in one's country. On the other hand, participating in international conferences to present research findings outside one's country leads to new connections with international peers that may turn into a wide range of future possibilities in terms of research and publication.

As per Global Teacher Education (2013), teacher education and training programmes are immensely enhanced when international dimensions are included in programming, designing as well as implementing the curriculum. Accordingly, internationalization of teacher education should not be viewed as an add-on, a frill or an extra, but as being integral to the fabric of a programme that is meant to produce teachers who are globally competent. In turn, such teachers stand to help their students to be globally competent as well.This is because there are many factors that are affecting internationalization both within and withoutthe various sectors, education included.

It is increasingly becoming clear that internationalization needs to be understood both at the national and institutional or sector levels because it has an important influence on the international dimension through policy, funding, programmes and regulatory frameworks. Knight (2004) observes that it is usually at the institutional level that the real process of internationalization takes place. It is important to note that internationalization at the national and institutional levels refers to the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education (Knight, 2003;2008).

The term *process* is deliberately used to mean that internationalization is an ongoing and continuing effort; *international* is used in the sense of relationships between and among nations, cultures or countries. Similarly, whereas *intercultural* is used to address the aspects of internationalization at home; *global* is included to provide the sense of worldwide scope. Accordingly, these three terms complement each other and together give richness both in breadth and depth to the process of internationalization. Knight (2008) argues that although internationalization carries the sense of relationships between and among nations, cultures and countries, it is also about relating to the diversity of cultures that exist within countries, communities, institutions and classrooms. It is worthwhile to note that both Knight (2008) and Global Teacher Education (2013) concur that although the definitions of an internationalized teacher education programme vary, they emphasize the importance of integration.

Arshad-Ayaz (2008) asserts that globalization has had a direct impact on education, including teacher education and training, through finance-driven reforms championed by such international bodies as the World Bank as well as the International Monetary Fund. For instance, a colossal sum of money has been allocated to UNESCO's ten year Teacher Training Initiative for sub-Saharan Africa (2006-2015) which advocates a holistic approach to realizing the quantitative as well as qualitative challenges related to teacher development (Dzvimbo and Moloi, 2013; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2007). Accordingly, four outputs have been earmarked as improvement of the status and working conditions of teachers; improvement of teacher management and administration structures; the development of appropriate teacher policies; and the enhancement of quality and coherence of teacher professional development.

Knight (2004) observes that despite the myriad of factors affecting internationalization both within and external to the education sector, teacher education and training inclusive, plus the accelerated pace of change, there is only a small number of academics or policy makers who are seriously studying the nuances as well as evolution of the term itself and challenges before it.For example, the National Communication Association (2014) holds that if faculty members have few international connections, they do not convey to students that these are necessary and expected. In such a situation, the next generation develops even fewer ties to international peers. Against this background, this paper focused on exploring the benefits, strategies and challenges in the internationalization of teacher education and training programmes.

2. Benefits

In their investigation of the successes, failures and challenges of internationalization in higher education, Urbanovi and Wilkins (2013) opine that assumptions have developed around the benefits of internationalization. Among others, it promotes cultural integration and harmony, improves the quality of education and research and fosters both country and institutional reputations internationally. Focusing on internationalizing higher education, teacher education and training inclusive, the National Communication Association (2014) documents that internationalization helps students develop the global critical thinking skills essential to contributing as citizens of the world and competing in the international marketplace; links communities to the world, expanding opportunities for university service and engagement while also enhancing their global competitiveness.

Similarly, internationalizing teacher education and training programmes contributes to national security, economy and prepares world leaders who know and value democracy. Furthermore, it enlivens faculty scholarship and teaching, expands research opportunities and provides a pathway to national and international distinction. Knight (2004) asserts that internationalization of teacher education and training has the potential to add value to the programmes offered as well as to the learning outcomes attained by students. This may be identified as learning outcomes in their own right or be integrated with other learning outcomes. Such learning outcomes, it is argued, form part of graduate profiles meeting the demands of the world of work. Internationalization of teacher education programmes supports and enhances student achievement across all content areas and levels.

An internationalized teacher education programme produces both teachers as well as learners who demonstrate global competence through awareness and curiosity about how the world works (Global Teacher Education, 2013). This is because such a programme is informed by disciplinary and interdisciplinary insights. Global competence is seen as an integrated independent skill.In particular, internationalization of teacher education equips teachers with the competencies, attitudes and habits of mind necessary for successful cross-cultural engagement at home and abroad. Accordingly, those teachers who experience an internationalized teacher education programme exhibit the features below and guide their students to do the same:

1. Investigate the world beyond their immediate environment, identifying main problems and carrying out well designed and age-appropriate research.
2. Recognize their own and others perspectives, articulating and accounting for such perspectives thoughtfully and respectfully.
3. Share ideas in an effective manner with various audiences, bridging geographic, linguistic, ideological and cultural barriers
4. Take necessary measures to improve conditions, considering themselves as players in the globe and participating reflectively.

Altbach and Knight (2007) note that internationalization of teacher education programmes has benefits for the students, institutions and employers. Students benefit from great international experience, acquired general and professional competence, changed attitudes towards studies, increased motivation and improved job levels. For institutions, there are benefits to do with emergence of opportunities for innovation, institution notoriety and enhanced quality. On the other hand, employers benefit in terms of more specialists with good foreign language skills, general and particular competencies, improved communication as well as activity levels.

More specifically therefore, internationalization increases the legitimacy of teacher education and training programmes; improves international competetiveness of teacher training institutions; better prepares graduates for employment in the global labour market and enhances quality of programmes, teaching and research. It is worth noting that ability to speak fluently in foreign languages is a highly rated value when looking for job. Indeed, graduates of internationalized programmes should be better able to think globally, communicate effectively across cultures and national frontiers, understand foreign business standards and practices. Similarly, international students provide institutions and nations with a new source of revenue while partnerships and international collaboration enable participation in large scale research.Furthermore, internationalization of teacher education and training promotes cultural integration as well as understanding.

3. Strategies

In response to the forces of globalization, Urbanovi and Wilkins (2013) reason, internationalization has itself increasingly become a strategy implemented at both national and institutional levels to achieve a diverse range of objectives. Initially, internationalization strategy focused on student and staff mobility, international cooperation and collaboration for specific objectives. However, it is now widely concerned with curriculum issues, quality assurance, international accreditation, staff development and international partnerships.

And, although historical, political, cultural and academic motives have driven internationalization, economic reasons have recently become more important, especially the recruitment of fee paying international students. Altbach and Knight (2007) and Knight (2003) are in agreement that to compete favourably, both educational systems and institutions need economies of scale. They argue that larger and more efficient institutions are more likely to attract high quality professors from abroad, particularly those who want to engage in research activities.

According to van der Wende (2007), the international competition for students and staff has led to an explicit and sometimes even aggressive competitive approach to internationalization. Indeed, many institutions seek to recruit ever increasing numbers of international students and also to recruit the highest quality students as well as staff.Some countries are encouraging foreign universities to establish brand campuses in order to meet social and economic objectives. Given this state of affairs, small states that experience high emigration rates should introduce policies and strategies to minimize the outflow of highly educated and skilled nationals. For instance, students who have received public funding could be obliged to stay and work in the country for a fixed number years after graduation.

Internationalization strategies implemented by institutions worldwide have resulted in global homogeneity of policies and practice (Urbanovi and Wilkins, 2013). Often, many institutions employ benchmarking techniques to facilitate imitation of best practice and to assess how their performance compares with high quality institutions in other countries. Knight (2004) observes that universities can increase and improve their international instruction through clear motivational mechanisms to engage in teaching in an intercultural context; training in intercultural skills; specialized support mechanisms; and subject didactics for teaching in a foreign language.

Whereas internationalization abroad is concerned with offshore activities, internationalization at home refers to the actions undertaken in the institution's home context. Urbanovi and Wilkins (2013) summarize internationalization abroad strategies as recruiting international students and staff; sending students to study or take internships abroad; developing and offering joint degree programmes; collaborating with researchers in other countries; developing partnerships and networking to improve institutional performance; and establishing international branch campuses to facilitate increased student mobility and gain a new source of revenue. It is worth observing that recruitment of best international professors will improve the legitimacy of institutions and enable them to also recruit the best students. Additionally, governments and institutions might attract the highest quality students by offering scholarships.

Common internationalization strategies adopted at home include modifying the curriculum to include an international dimension that is relevant to both home and international students; teaching courses in English; improving the student services and support offered to international students; and implementing quality assurance procedures to ensure that education and research meet international standards. As per Knight (2004), internationalization in terms of actual policies, programmes and strategies that are used at the national and institutional levels include academic programmes; foreign language policy; internationalized curricula; international students; teaching-learning process; cross-cultural training; visiting lecturers and scholars; and active involvement of faculty and staff. Furthermore, there should be articulate rationale and goals for internationalization. This includes recognition of international dimension in institutional mission statements, planning and policy documents, community-based partnerships with NGO groups, community service and intercultural project work.

4. Challenges

Altbach and Knight (2007) argue that it generally seems to be assumed in the literature that internationalization is a positive thing and limited research and has focused on the challenges and drawbacks. The fact that the term internationalization is interpreted differently presents challenges with respect to developing a conceptual model that provides some clarity on meaning and principles to guide policy and practice. Knight (2004) presents a catalogue of challenges based on various cultures. These are ethnic, teacher training, academic and disciplinary cultures.

Ethnic cultures are to do with issues regarding silent students, religion, geopolitical or historical background, among others. The local culture of teacher training includes country, regions and concepts of time. Academic cultures refer to roles of both students and lecturers; mutual expectations; unwritten rules of behavior in class; ethical behavior and expectations regarding group work. Disciplinary cultures revolve around assignments, examinations and assessments as well as teaching styles.

Urbanovi and Wilkins (2013) identify specific challenges to internationalization as fear of losing one's ethnicity due to mergers; inability to communicate, especially in English; increase in the level of racism and nationalism among domestic population; lack of respect for local culture and environment; influx of third world immigrants establishing a permanent presence in a country; and brain drain. Furthermore, since internationalization is often accompanied with marketization, the quality of education might fall, especially if international students lack language skills or motivation for study; may not be cost-effective if there is insufficient demand for internationalized programmes; may be inappropriate for domestic students who do not need international competencies; and costs of investing in the relevant infrastructure and staff can be unaffordable.

To improve the effectiveness of teacher education and training programmes, Urbanovi and Wilkins (2013) advice that there is need to establish clear goals and strategies at both national and institutional levels; develop and implement a carefully designed management programme; measure and evaluate performance after internationalization strategies are implemented; engage in benchmarking with the best teacher training institutions globally; and invest in training to improve the foreign language competence of both teaching and non- teaching staff as well as students. Other intervention measures are to increase and improve international marketing activities; establish barriers to emigration; attract the best international professors and students; and achieve economies of scale through mergers.

5. Conclusion

In the preceding literature, it was indicated that although various people, especially scholars define internationalization differently, they nevertheless lay emphasis on the significance of integration. Integration denotes the process of infusing the international as well as intercultural dimension into programmes and policies. This is particularly crucial in the sense that the international dimension remains not only central but also sustainable. It is worth noting that internationalization of teacher education and training in particular, is never an add-on or a frill. Instead, it is an integral component of a programme meant to produce teachers who are globally competent. In turn, such teachers play a key role in producing globally competetive students.

It was also noted that internationalization leads to inclusion of an international dimension in the various aspects of its holistic management so as to improve the standards of teaching as well as learning and to realize the anticipated competencies. It is also increasingly becoming clear that internationalization requires to be conceptualized at both the national or sector level and at the institutional level. In particular, one requires to adequately understand the broader world in order to act accordingly in a particular situation as well as location. It is important to observe that if faculty members have strong international connections as well as interactions, they in turn convey to the students that these are both necessary and expected. This way, the subsequent generations develop even more ties to their international colleagues.

With respect to benefits of globalization, it was observed that globally competent teachers display competencies, attitudes and habits of the mind necessary for cross-cultural participation both at home as well as abroad. Internationalization of teacher training has the potential to add value to the programmes offered as well as the learning outcomes achieved by students. Particularly, these outcomes may be identified as those in their own right or integrated with others as well as those that comprise part of graduate profiles that meet the requirements of the world of work. It is worth noting that teachers who undergo an internationalized training programme are often able to investigate the world beyond their immediate environment; recognize, articulate and explain various perspectives. In addition, such teachers are reported to communicate ideas to a variety of audiences and take action to improve different conditions. To attain these, the teachers should view themselves as players in the world and hence participate reflectively.

Due to globalization, it was shown; internationalization has increasingly become a strategy employed at both national as well as institutional levels to realize different goals. While internationalization at home refers to those actions undertaken in the institution's home context, internationalization abroad is to do with offshore activities. Common internationalization strategies adopted at home involve curriculum modification so as to include an international dimension that is applicable to both home as well as international students; teaching courses in English; improving the student services and support provided to international students; and embracing quality assurance measures to ensure that education meets the required standards. On the other hand, internationalization abroad strategies are to do with recruitment of international students and staff; sending students to take internships abroad; developing partnerships and networks to improve institutional performance.

As noted earlier on, it is generally agreed that benefits of internationalization, especially with regard to teacher education and training far outweigh the drawbacks. As drawbacks, internationalization encourages faculty and students to emigrate; is inappropriate for domestic students who do not need international competencies; might not be cost-effective if there is insufficient demand for internationalized programmes; might lead to fall in quality if international students lack language skills or motivation for study; and costs of investing in infrastructure and staff can be prohibitive.

To enhance internationalization of teacher education and training, it was proposed, there is need to develop and implement thoughtfully designed change management programmes; engage in benchmarking with best teacher training institutions worldwide; invest in staff development to improve understanding of goals and methods of internationalization; and measure and evaluate performance after implementation of internationalization strategies. Other strategies that may be employed to boost internationalization of teacher training include clearly defined goals at both national as well as institutional levels; establishing barriers to emigration; improving the foreign language competence of staff and students; increasing and improving international marketing activities; and attracting best international professors as well as students.

References

Altbach, P. G. and Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and dreams. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* 11(3-4): 290-305.

Arshad-Ayaz, A. (2008). *From producing citizens to producing managers: Education in a globalized world. In R. K. Hopson, C. C. Yeakey and F. M. Boakari (eds). Advances in Education in Diverse Communities: Research Policy and Praxis (Power, Voice and the Public Good: Schooling and Education in Global Societies.* Emerald Publishing Group. 6:

Chang'ach, J. K. (2013). Turning challenges into opportunities: Prospects for African Universities. *Journal of Education and Human Development,* 2(1): 9-17.

Crosling, G., Edwards, R. and Schroder, B. (2008). Internationalizing the curriculum: The implementation experience in faculty of business and economics. *Journal of Higher Education Policy Management,* 30(2): 107-21.

Dzvimbo, K. P. (2011). Globalization and the Internationalization of Higher Education in Sub Saharan Africa: Pitfalls and Possibilities. A Paper Presented at the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society (SACHES) Annual Conference held at Munyonyo Commonwealth Resort, Kampala, Uganda, between 8-11 August.

Dzvimbo, K. P. and Moloi, K. C. (2013). Globalization and the internationalization of higher education in Sub – Saharan Africa. *South African Journal of Education,* 33(3): 1-16.

Global Teacher Education (2013). What is Internationalization of Teacher Education? . Available: http://www.globalteachereducation.org/what-internationalization-teacher-education

Knight, J. (2003). *Internationalization of Higher Education Practices and Priorities: 2003 IAU Survey Report.* International Association of Universities: Paris.

Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches and rationale. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* 8: 5-31. Available: https://tru.ca/_shared/assets/Internationalization-Remodeled29349.pdf

Knight, J. (2008). *Higher education in turmoil: The changing world of internationalization.* Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, Netherlands.

National Communication Association (2014). Internationalization. Available: http://www.nation.org/international

Romaniuk, D. (2014). Towards an international university: Benefits, challenges and recommendations. Available: http://www.procesbolonski.uw.edu.p1/dane/Dan

Soderqvist, M. (2002). *Internationalization and its management at higher education institutions: Applying conceptual, content and discourse analysis.* HelsinkiSchool of Economics: Helsinki, Finland.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2007). Report of the Teacher Education Policy Forum for Sub-Saharan Africa: Paris: UNESCO, 6-9 November. Available: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001627/162798e.pdf

Urbanovi, C. and Wilkins, S. (2013). Internationalization as a Strategy to Improve the Quality of Higher Education in Small States: Stakeholder Perspectives in Lithuania. *Higher Education Policy,* 26(3): 373-96.

van der Wende, M. (2007). Internationalization of of higher education in the oecd countries: Challenges and opportunities for the coming decade. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* 11(3-4): 274-89.