

## FACULTY MEMBERS' EXPERIENCES IN INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE CURRICULUM IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A STUDY OF KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY, ZAMBIA

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### Abstract

*In the face of an increasingly complex, global and competitive environment, internationalisation has become an important strategic priority for many higher education institutions. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences faculty members in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) face in the IoC focusing on Kwame Nkrumah University (KNU) as a case study. The objectives of the study were to establish the experiences of faculty members on IoC in Higher Education Institutions and to determine how these experiences of faculty members have contributed toward the internationalisation of the curriculum in HEIs. The study found that Faculty members at KNU acknowledge and appreciate the presence of IoC at the university. Improved teaching and learning, increased cultural awareness and language skills, improved international collaborations and visibility of the university were cited as benefits of IoC in the University. Lack of financial support, fewer collaborations with other international institutions and limited access to technology facilities were challenges cited. The University administrators should create a strong relationship with foreign universities, hold capacity-building workshops for faculty members to internationalise the curriculum effectively and adequately fund international programs and activities.*

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Experience, Faculty members, Internationalisation

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the face of an increasingly complex, global and competitive environment, internationalisation has become an important strategic priority for many countries, governments, and higher education institutions. The process has accelerated dramatically worldwide (International Association of Universities, 2005; Murphy, 2007). Mestenhauser (2005) has pointed out that there is broad agreement among scholars and practitioners that internationalisation is no longer a choice but has become an urgent necessity, evidence can be found in the 2005 International Association of Universities (IAU) survey, which revealed that most institutional leaders worldwide believe that Internationalisation is a complex, multi-dimensional concept defined in different cultural contexts, including disciplines (Ellingboe, 1998) and geographies (Mestenhauser, 1998).

Leask (2004) outlined that internationalisation of the curriculum has the potential to connect broader institutions' agendas focused on internationalisation with student learning. However, the focus of internationalisation of the curriculum in policy and practice is more on what some students will experience than on what all students will learn. Two main characteristics define an internationalised curriculum focused

on student learning. First, it will be connected to different cultures and practices of knowing, doing and being in the disciplines through the active engagement of faculty in the process of internationalising the curriculum. Second, faculty members who do not have the experience, skills or knowledge required to internationalise the curriculum will be supported by expert facilitators in defining intended internationalised learning outcomes and assisting all students in achieving them. Faculty members are often mentioned as the main drivers and actors in the efforts to internationalise teaching. It is surprising to note that although most authors have recognised for decades the pivotal role of faculty members in internationalisation efforts in programs of higher education, at the beginning of the 1990s, there was still not much written about the perceptions of faculty regarding the internationalisation process (Carter, 1992). The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences faculty members in Higher Education Institutions face in the internationalisation of the curriculum focusing on KNU as a case study. The objectives of the study were to establish the experiences of faculty members, on internationalising the curriculum in Higher Education Institutions and to determine how the experiences of faculty members have contributed toward the internationalisation of the curriculum in HEIs. The study would contribute to the increasing knowledge base of the internationalisation of the curriculum in HEIs; it also provided specific insights into the perspectives of faculty in HEIs towards different academic and institutional strategies for the internationalisation of the curriculum.

Internationalization of the curriculum in Zambian higher education according to the study conducted by Masaiti et al (2020), the nature of the internationalization of higher education in Zambia was linked with efforts to attract foreign personnel and students. One hundred five joint initiatives, including publications, research, collaboration on international research projects, facilities for international students, massive open online courses, campuses abroad, integration of refugees, participation of international students in social and cultural life, volunteer opportunities, and student and staff exchange programs take part of internationalization in Zambia. Recruiting of personnel and students and collaborative programs the study revealed that five of the six institutions under study offered joint programs, and all six included foreign faculty and students. The study by Masaiti also revealed that publications, cooperation, international research partnerships, and resources for global students were seen to be taking ground in all six institutions. The institutions collaborated internationally and on joint publications, research, and projects, with public universities reporting the most joint publications and research projects. The findings presented the three theme areas—the nature of internationalization, the drivers behind it, and Zambia's perceptions of its advantages.

The conclusions showed that the institutions under investigation in Zambia had collaborative programs, as well as international employees and students. Masaiti G et al. (2020) study discovered that Zambia's higher education institutions had facilities for international students and publishing, collaboration, and research with international partners. The study concluded that student and staff mobility, teaching and learning resources, research, and collaboration were significant factors in Zambia's internationalization of higher education.

## **2.0 THEORETICAL LOCALE AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Curriculum Internationalisation**

Internationalisation of the curriculum is incorporating an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum. It is also in the context of teaching and learning arrangements and support services of a program of study (Leask, 2009). The idea that IoC is a process that involves all facets of the university's learning and teaching activities, as well as its support areas, is a critical component of Leask's definition. The network theory of internationalisation is the starting point inside a process approach was another way to examine a firm's internationalization. This approach offered an adequate framework for understanding firms as embedded players in business networks (Johanson & Mattsson, 1993; McAuley, 1999; Ruzzier *et al.*, 2006). Johanson and Vahlne (1990) carried out a network perspective analysis of the internationalization process based on the Uppsala model.

## 2.2 Faculty Members' Engagement in the Internationalisation of the Curriculum

The relevance of internationalization initiatives at the institutional and teaching community levels was emphasized by the globalization of higher education and curriculum enhancement (Altbach, 2017). The lecturers are responsible for carefully planning and methodically incorporating foreign and intercultural viewpoints into the curriculum. Elspeth Jones and Sally Brown (2018) examined the experiences of faculty members who engage in international teaching collaborations and mobility programs, shedding light on the impact of such experiences on teaching, research, and professional development. The faculty members choose the content and design and oversee the teaching, learning, and evaluation processes (Hsu, 2017; Leask & Bridge, 2013). The professional growth of lecturers who implement their internationalization plans within their subject at the program and course level also falls under the preview of higher education institutions. Thus, it was crucial to identify the meanings the faculty members give to improve their competencies and the development of IoC. In other words, understanding the lecturers' perspective of IoC contributes to the quality of education.

Leask and Susie Brown (2018) provide—insights in their study from various contributors on strategies, challenges, and best practices in internationalizing the curriculum, offering practical guidance for faculty members and institutions. Faculty members' roles have significantly changed over the years, moving from teaching to service, and research, reflecting shifting priorities with the academy and beyond. Within this dynamic environment, faculty members were often caught between competing priorities, internationalisation being just one of them. Most of the internationalisation research had focused on organisational internationalisation while little research had been conducted into how internationalisation impacted faculty members within these organisations. Despite these various ways faculty members could and did engage, not all considered international research, teaching, and creative work central to their academic mission and professional success and therefore had no reason to engage. A Reflective Analysis by Evelyn Ho *et al.* (2019) discusses faculty development initiatives aimed at supporting the internationalization of the curriculum, examining the impact of such programs on faculty members' attitudes, knowledge, and practices. Compounding faculty members' indifference to internationalisation was the issue of resources. While it was true that institutions were rhetorically very supportive of internationalisation, they did not provide material support. This left faculty members who did not want to engage in doing so with their resources, in concert with their interests, and without regard for institutional priorities. Because of this lack of material support, faculty members often saw international initiatives as additional work with little or no benefit.

Jones *et al.* (2019) proposed several factors that would motivate faculty members to engage in the internationalisation of the curriculum effectively: Breaking the 'Iron cage': international educators needed to be aware of the 'iron cage' created by institutional structures and job descriptions. The 'iron cage' should break to expand the roles and responsibilities of faculty members so that they present themselves as a whole person rather than the one piece of internationalisation they were contributing to. Secondly, Jian pointed out that there was need to Create a shared language: international educators should be aware of the different definitions and implications of specific terms in various disciplines. Thirdly, Jian emphasizes on faculty's ownership of the curriculum. Faculty members should realise the dynamic nature of IoC as it is time-consuming and ever-changing. Internationalisation of higher education was a dynamic system with multiple factors and variables. Faculty members must constantly revisit what had been done and revise or update the approaches and projects and should Make sense of the internationalisation of the curriculum. There was need to be proactive and create a culture of open communication with various offices and individuals on campus to align goals for promoting IoC.

According to Zayed (2020), the problems faculty members experience as they work to increase the internationalisation of curricula was the failure to adequately analyse and identify numerous difficulties connected to the internationalization of curricula. Zayed (2020) reported that these difficulties included the professional development of teachers, curriculum, and infrastructure.

Finding out whether faculty members had positive, mixed, or neutral opinions on internationalization was just as crucial as discovering how they felt about it. Although it had been acknowledged that internationalization had changed higher education, it was unclear if this transformation was a net positive or negative development because it had become synonymous with "doing good", and people were less interested in challenging its effectiveness and fundamental nature: an instrument to improve the quality of education or research. Ndaipa (2023) in study revealed that IoC is mostly understood in terms of developing intercultural knowledge, skills and values, mobility of students, teachers and academic program, and teaching international students and languages and not so much about the faculty members involvement.

Faculty members were crucial in helping students build their international competence in two key areas. First, educators interacted with students in an educational and advisory capacity inside and outside the classroom. Students looked to their faculty advisors to provide interpretation and recommendations regarding course selection and extra-curricular academic program participation. Their suggestions, counsel, and advice influenced the breadth and depth of a student's international concentration. Second, academics frequently developed and ran campus global education initiatives in large part. According to Knight *et al.* (2008), many faculties involved in international campus programs tended to incorporate a global perspective in the advisory. Yet, a more significant number of faculty are uninformed.

### **2.3 Challenges in the Internationalization of the Curriculum**

The curriculum tended to be the domain of faculty members, and internationalization of the curriculum could not occur without their full support. At the same time, faculty members operated in a context demanding extensive scholarly contributions to teaching, research and community service (Kezar, 2000). It was, therefore, important to perceptively engage/support faculty and not impose internationalization of the curriculum as an extra burden. Among the main challenges facing faculty members in this endeavour, the literature points to a gap between faculty knowledge and course design. In a study by Bell (2006), workshop participants said it was unclear to their faculty members what an internationalized curriculum would look like. Besides lacking an understanding of integrating an international dimension into the curriculum, faculty members found it challenging to work effectively with international students. Workshop participants also indicated that there was a differential uptake across disciplines, which confirmed the perceived cultural neutrality of some academic disciplines identified as a barrier in the literature.

Some faculty members may have believed that there were no cultural differences in technology, for instance, although the application of technologies was never far removed from specific cultural and ethical settings. An ongoing challenge for faculty members was insufficient recognition for their efforts to internationalize the curriculum, particularly when it came to tenure and promotion (Kezar, 2000). For example, some faculty members involved in international development programs found it challenging to have this work count as a peer-reviewed service to the community. While teaching, research and service were all considered for tenure, service was often not weighted as highly. With the increase in demand for international scholars within recent years, several challenges had formed, thus creating barriers to internationalization development. For instance, funding was a significant concern for domestic and international students studying abroad because of the diminishing government funding (Shetty and Rudell, 2000). Hayward (2000) also indicated that Federal Funding for almost all postsecondary international areas had declined over the last decade. This included support for educational and cultural exchanges, language study, faculty research, and other international initiatives. This had been a real challenge for universities as the demand for a more significant global presence was rising, and the funding for such aims was decreasing. An additional challenge was that security measures had become far more stringent, making it a burden for many nations and scholars to travel to specific regions to obtain a J-1 (school or faculty visa), creating social exclusion based on assumptions of security issues. (Bell, 2006) outlined that despite the highly regulated process of obtaining a travel permit, the rate of international education had not decreased. The new security procedures had risen in several ways, with more security questions, criminal background checks, notification that immigration documents should be carried out at all times, and fingerprinting (Rudzki, 2000). However, certain regions may be excluded because of political and national conflicts, which could limit the international knowledge system that was being developed.

Another challenge that arose was the issue of accurate education knowledge. Some universities did not believe in western teachings, which created a struggle with those universities that believe in western teaching. All regions, nations and universities should be involved to achieve a successful global knowledge network. For example, the University at Albany had a meagre collaboration rate with universities from the Middle Eastern world. However, political issues and past historical events could create a problem in future collaborations between universities by preventing internationalization (American Council on Education, 2002). Brain drains, concerns about preserving local culture, financial constraints, and the requirement to be fluent in English were among the obstacles to national internationalization identified. More translation of the internationalization of higher education policy in Mozambique was necessary, according to Campbell's (2004) theory, as the findings indicated an imbalance between an overemphasis on cooperation and mobility (which could be linked to the history of internationalization of higher education) and an under emphasis on the policy.

The primary reason faculty did not engage in international activities was financial. However, there were several other barriers faculty members had to overcome, including administration support (Andreasen, 2003; Dewey & Duff, 2009), policies that discouraged untenured faculty from participating (Andreasen, 2003; Stohl, 2007), lack of time, lack of language skills, lack opportunity (Andreasen, 2003) leaving current research, international work not conducive with raising a family. The mismatch between academic calendars, lack of financial stability, compliance with additional research board requirements, lack of clarity regarding internationalization initiatives and temporary replacements of faculty members travelling abroad. Not all faculty members are engaged in the international context. However, for those who wanted to hire, the barriers were genuine and could-do act as deterrents to international participation (Andreasen, 2003). While faced with both a lack of incentives and significant barriers, it was interesting to know that faculty members were primarily positive about internationalization (Altbach et al., 1996). Institutions had specific priorities concerning internationalization, one of which was faculty member engagement. However, much of the impetus for internationalization appeared to come from the institution with little regard to how it would impact faculty members. As a result, there seemed to be a significant misalignment between internationalization, as seen by the institution and internationalization, as seen by faculty members. Other challenges of internationalization of the curriculum had direct relations with economic problems and rate of the country's development, lack of coordination of textbooks. The use of new technologies in universities had posed a challenge and the non-adoptability with the global standards, structure inflexibility and the inability to adopt the communicative and informatics needs.

The teaching staff must understand how internationalization relates to them and their students in the context of who they were as people and what they do for a living. It cannot assume that they would understand the discourse about internationalization or even have any meaning. Their discipline's discourse, which had its cultural roots, is all around them. Through institutional policies and local disciplinary and cross-disciplinary communities of practice, they would need to feel validated in the process of curriculum innovation for internationalization. They would anticipate that the home and curriculum internationalization would be valued in concrete ways, such as by providing resources, incentives, and prizes for success. Faculty employees who devoted much effort to creating and delivering globally focused education would be hard-pressed to obtain a positive response if there was no additional compensation, help or coaching and scarcely any acknowledgement. It was not surprising that employees who had realized this would wait for others to take up the internationalization process and remain on the sidelines.

Access to resources to support intercultural engagement (such as funding for travel to collaborate with scholars from other cultures on inter-disciplinary projects) and strategies to extend international partnerships with universities beyond study abroad and exchange agreements could provide some direction. Communities of practice (Wenger, 1999) comprised multicultural staff across various disciplines and access to resources to support intercultural engagement. According to Leask (2009), who examined the experience of implementing a significant curriculum innovation for internationalization, it was crucial to involve academic staff in the change agenda from the beginning to prevent a reactionary response and entrenched and defensive behavior.

Changes in the curriculum were inherently "messy" and chaotic. Any adjustment wouldn't make every employee feel at ease. Leask discovered that it was critical to constantly recognize and address the need for professional development that rewarded and promoted participation in the transformation agenda. It was crucial to remember that any transformation agenda supported by the institution would ultimately be successful or unsuccessful based on what happened in the classroom. The difficulties connected with altering one's and employer's cultural attitudes were the main barriers to increasing academic staff participation in internationalization.

It is crucial to understanding the complexity of what is being tried to accomplish when managing curriculum innovation for internationalization, as well as how faculty members' beliefs and perceptions who were also culturally influenced would affect their willingness to embrace and promote change in the curriculum. Bland et al. (2000, in Gijssels & Harendza, 2006) recognized three elements for curricular development in medical schools: internal networking, resource allocation, and the institution's relationship with its external environment.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the phenomenological approach because it examined the phenomena as it manifests in people's experiences, how they perceive and understand phenomena and the meaning of phenomena in their subjective experiences. The study adopted the mixed method approach because it is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour. This study's research design made use of a case study research design. A case study research design was considered appropriate because a single university was the research site.

The studies targeted all the faculty members at the university whose responsibilities involved teaching. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling, was used to pick the faculty members to participate in the study participants the study. The study used a semi-structured questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions to collect data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data.

### **4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The faculty members revealed that internationalisation of the curriculum is essential for actualising global knowledge and skills development into the curriculum through lecturers' and students' exchange of programs. Faculty members felt that creating a relationship with foreign universities, employing foreign experts to enhance teaching and research, establishing a department for effective curriculum internationalisation through research, promoting foreign studies from different universities and providing workshops for students would be one of the effective ways of internationalising the curriculum not only at KNU but also in other Universities dotted in the country. Beyond the financial limitations, several recent studies have examined other barriers that exist when it comes to faculty member participation in internationalisation of the curriculum. Most faculty members revealed that the internationalisation of the curriculum was not progressing at a large scale because funds were not enough to fund and purchase teaching and learning materials that promote the internationalisation of the curriculum for programs in various departments in the university.

#### **4.1 Emerging Themes**

Collaboration is an important factor in IoC for faculty members because it allows faculty members to share their expertise and knowledge with other faculty members around the world which can help to improve their quality of their curriculum. Administrative support is important in the successful implementation of the IoC. The support includes creating and maintaining a system framework for governing and managing of the implementation as well as providing guidance and assistance to developers as they implement IoC. Critical requirement for the faculty member's the implementation of IoC are faculty members must have a firm understanding of internationalization and cultural diversity of students. They must have experience in teaching international students. They should also understand the needs and challenges of international students. Above demonstrate a commitment to the IoC. The study found that there was need to develop an internationalized

curriculum in order to promote understanding and empathy across cultures and backgrounds, thereby fostering deeper cultural and social understanding and cooperation.

It is important for faculty members to have adequate skills and knowledge in IoC because they will be able to identify and understand the various ways in which globalization has impacted educational institutions and the curriculum around the world. The knowledge and skills on IoC will foster effective implementation and integrate various cultural and linguistic background. Faculty will also provide support and resources to students who are interested Internationalisation of the curriculum is incorporating an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum. The findings were in line with the study's theoretical framework in the context of teaching and learning arrangements and support services of the institution's programs. This is supported by Leask's (2009) view of that the IoC is a process that involves all facets of the university's learning and teaching activities, as well as its support areas which is a critical component of Leask's definition. The findings were in agreement with the network theory of internationalization; the starting point inside a process approach was another way to examine a firm's internationalization. This approach offered an adequate framework for understanding firms as embedded players in business networks (Johanson & Mattsson, 1993; McAuley, 1999; Ruzzier *et al.*, 2006). Johanson and Vahlne (1990) carried out a network perspective analysis of the internationalization process based on the Uppsala model a critical aspect in internationalizing of curricular. In line with the network theory, this study established that the exchange programs for faculty members are essential as they give faculty members a global perspective and make them more sensitive to the changes happening outside their respective cultural contexts (McAuley, 1999; Ruzzier *et al.*, 2006). Johanson and Vahlne, 1990). It was evident that an exchange program permits faculty members to also engage in new research projects or study abroad. ultimately, it is important for institutions and their faculty members to determine what advantages exchange programs can offer and determine which ones are the most valuable to their particular institutions. The study found the university policy and guidelines are important to ensuring that the curriculum is internationally consistent and should be specific to the needs of an institution and tailored to unique educational needs of students.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

This study was undertaken from the perceptive of faculty members out of an interest in their priorities regarding internationalization. The purpose was to examine how faculty members envision and experience the internationalization of the curriculum. Overall, faculty members expressed great support for the internationalization of the curriculum, not only for themselves but for the student body. This is evident by the number of responses representing a more expansive role for the institution. The study suggested that the underlying reasons that faculty members do not engage in the international context are not because of a lack of desire but a lack of resources and support. It's essential to keep moving forward with the curriculum's internationalisation in Zambia and encourage it to grow. As globalization progresses, it is crucial to comprehend cultural differences and interactions between Zambian people and people from other countries and backgrounds to integrate problem-solving, communication and shared knowledge into all interacting communities. There must be a persistent push for higher learning in Zambia that combines international methods and practices targeted toward improving the cultural competency of the stakeholders participating in this endeavor for higher education in Zambia to be competitive in the global market.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

The study established that the university faculties that were covered by the study lacked adequate financial support and relevant exposure to international platforms the aspects that negatively affect effectiveness of the internationalization of the higher education curricular. Therefore, if the university has to attain its vision to become a leading university in the provision of quality higher education and research at national and international levels, the university management and the university council must ensure that schools, departments and specific faculty members have adequate funding to implement local and international

curricular. The management and council members must ensure that its faculty members do not lag behind in the global platforms by supporting the relevant exposure of members to enable them operate at the same levels with the academia in the global village.

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