

International Education Providers in Nigeria

ISAAC N. OBASI, OLAMIDE E. ADESINA, AND SUSAN N. OBASI

Isaac N. Obasi is associate professor in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Botswana, and a regular columnist on higher education for the Daily Champion newspaper, in Lagos, Nigeria. E-mail: zikobasi@yahoo.com and obasiin@mopipi.ub.bw. Olamide E. Adesina is Chief Academic Standards Officer and Acting Head, in the Division of Curriculum Development, National Universities Commission, in Abuja, Nigeria. E-mail: olamidesther@yahoo.com. Susan N. Obasi is a lecturer in the Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies, University of Nigeria, in Nsukka, Nigeria. E-mail: sueobasi@yahoo.com.

The current literature illustrates that cross-border higher education is not a new development. In Nigeria, the University of Ibadan originated in 1948 as a college of the University of London, during British colonial rule. Recognized international providers have always been partners in Nigeria's higher education development. Yet, under globalization cross-border higher education has undergone a major transformation due largely to technologically sophisticated methods of delivery and a dominant profit-driven motive. The situation in Nigeria also reflects this new global trend and the listing of education as a tradable commodity in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) under the World Trade Organization.

LEVELS OF INTERNATIONAL PROVIDERS

The international providers in Nigeria can be classified into four levels. In the first level there are providers of primary and secondary education with international standards. Two examples of this group include the Loyola Jesuit College and the Lekki British School.

The second level consists of enterprises providing certificate and diploma-based programs, as well as lifelong-education information-technology (IT)-related courses, which are carried out electronically or by physical contact. This group operates outside the regulatory ambit of the national higher education licensing and quality-assurance agency. Some examples of these providers are the NCC Education Nigeria, which advertises itself as "bringing British Education" to its customers and runs diploma programs, leading to degrees of some United Kingdom-based universities; the International Baccalaureate Organization, in Geneva, which operates through the Lagos-based private school (the D-Ivy College) and offers a two-year diploma program; the Informatics Institute, which awards an international diploma in computing; and the APTECH Ltd. which prides itself as a Global Learning Solutions Company, is from India and is listed in its Stock Exchange.

The third level comprises foreign commercial companies

that offer educational support services to prospective students for overseas institutions, particularly those in the United Kingdom. The hosting of educational exhibitions and fairs by some of these firms has now become annual rituals during which the admissions procedures for potential students are fast-tracked. A typical example is the EduWorld International, which serves as a major recruitment agency for universities in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Other leading education recruitment agencies include the British Educational Training and Admission Services; the Abel Wright College; and the IBT Education Group (an Australia-based education company), which recruits students for the United Kingdom-based LIBT and HIBT colleges that in turn maintain partnership with the Brunel University at Uxbridge and the University of Hertfordshire, respectively. One disturbing dimension of their activities is the promise of fast-tracked degree programs for foreign students for dubious reasons. For instance, the IBT UK college program promises the reduction of course duration by up to one year.

The fourth level, the primary focus of this paper, is made up of recognized and nonrecognized providers, as well as commercial company higher education institutions.

ROGUE CROSS-BORDER PROVIDERS

The National Universities Commission (NUC) is the sole agency responsible for registering and accrediting all institutions offering university degrees in Nigeria. Any higher education institution not licensed and accredited by the NUC is illegal. A growing number of local commercial education enterprises and foreign education consulting firms offer various kinds of degrees on behalf of foreign universities in Nigeria. A typical example of such a case is the New Idea Consultants, which has operated since 1997 as a "degree mill" for St. Clements University. In 2005, the NUC ordered the closure of

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its illegal offshore programs in Nigeria, taking this measure after its investigation and discovery that in addition to operating illegally this organization was running a distance-mode PhD degree program for 24 months and distance-mode MBA and MSc degrees for 9 to 15 months.

In 2005, Nigeria's minister of education announced the discovery of an illegal university in the federal capital territory of Abuja, offering medical programs on behalf of a foreign university. Although the government did not take this lightly, there have been countless numbers of advertisements of their programs by international providers in daily newspapers and on the Internet. However, more worrisome is our finding that

EduWorld International in its Internet advertisement of a PhD program offered by one of its clients (Trinity College), promised its completion in six months (with an escaping phrase “or more years”)—and to be executed “via 100% Online Distance Learning.” These fraudulent cases in Nigeria corroborate some of the findings elsewhere already reported internationally. There are also offshore master's programs operated by some other foreign universities. An MBA program of the Lincoln University, in California, is offered through the SKB Executive Marketing Nigeria Ltd. and a master's program is presented by the Netherlands Business School (Universiteit Nyenrode). Both of these programs come from low-end educational institutions, and their programs do not have the official approval of the NUC.

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

In spite of these reported illegal cases, there are also legally sanctioned activities of international providers in Nigeria's fast-growing private higher education industry, which are reflective of some positive aspects of globalization. Some providers operate in partnership with locally licensed private universities in a manner that probably meets the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines on Cross-border Higher Education or some of the expectations of the Association of African Universities in the Accra Declaration (2004) on GATS and the Internationalization of Higher Education in Africa. One of these providers is the American University of Nigeria, Yola, which has a partnership with the American University in Washington, DC, modeled after the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates.

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THE NIGERIAN REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Nigeria currently has both tight (strict or restrictive) and loose regulatory frameworks. At the higher education level, the regulatory framework is restrictive even when it has some limitations in its capacity to monitor cases of illegal Internet-based cross-border actions. But at the lower level of diploma and IT-related programs, Nigeria appears unable to check the activities of unrecognized and rogue cross-border providers.

A COMPREHENSIVE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Although there is no detailed NUC policy to check the activities of illegally operating cross-border providers at the lower levels of the higher education system, in contrast to the legally operating ones at the higher level, the current government thinking is against the rogue cross-border providers. However, since 2005 NUC has been working on a comprehensive regu-

latory framework. However, this process has been somewhat slow, and thus we recommend that actions be swiftly taken as some reputable foreign providers would have a positive role to play in the broader higher education landscape in Nigeria. ■

Higher Education Trends in Eritrea

RAVINDER RENA

Ravinder Rena is associate professor in the Department of Business and Economics, Eritrea Institute of Technology-Mai Nefhi. Address: Post Box No. 7956, Asmara, Eritrea. E-mail: ravinder_rena@yahoo.com; dravinderrena@gmail.com.

Eritrea got its independence in 1991 after a 30-year freedom struggle. It is a small country located in the Horn of Africa with an estimated population of about 4 million. It is also one of the poorest countries in the world, with the per capita income estimated at around US\$200 and a 66.5 percent poverty rate.

COLLEGES IN ERITREA

In order to develop education in general and higher education in particular, the government has exerted efforts to develop its human resources after independence. In line with this, the University of Asmara, the only university in the country, has supplied a workforce of about 12,000 graduates from 1992 to 2007 (including 1,505 graduated in September 2007), of whom more than half are graduates at the bachelor's level and employed in different government and private sectors. Further, in 2004, the university began master's programs in six different fields. These programs are being run through funds obtained from the government and bilateral cooperation agreements. The university has also expanded its undergraduate programs. Currently, the university has 260 faculty members with about 120 PhD holders, over 50 of whom are Eritreans teaching in 43 departments. The University of Asmara has been temporarily closed, and thus all these staff have been transferred to the Eritrea Institute of Technology and other colleges. Since the local manpower is insufficient in the higher learning institutions, the government has hired (on a contract basis) about 300 expatriates from India and 10 from Pakistan. The expatriate teaching staff constitutes about 60 percent of the total teaching staff in the colleges. All the staff, both locals and expatriates, are full-time employees. In 2004, nakfa 35.89 million (US\$2.39 million) has been spent on Asmara University.

In 2004, eight other new colleges were established at the tertiary level in different parts of Eritrea. These colleges are