

also continue to learn a great deal outside the classroom. We learn which behaviours are likely to be rewarded and which are likely to be punished. We learn social skills for interacting with other children. Learning equally takes place through interaction with other people, we continue to learn throughout our lives and this affects almost everything we do. Since learning is considered a life-long process, educational and cultural exchanges become inevitable.

According to Fagan (2008), human societies have exchanged raw materials and manufactured items with their neighbours and even with people living in other areas from the earliest times. People have travelled far in search of valued materials – such as the best tool making stones, metal ores, and seashells – or for artifacts not manufactured locally, perhaps mirrors or wrought metal tools. Similarly, institutions of learning embark on enrolment of students locally or internationally through immersion, undergraduate, post-graduate or even excursions programs in a bid to either internationalize the institution or expose their students to other cultures or practices. All these are various forms of exchanges and could either be cultural, educational or even both depending on the motive for embarking on it.

Educational and cultural exchanges within the ECOWAS can never be over emphasized as “there is an increasing awareness that the need for learning never stops. There is also an increasing awareness on the part of educated people that our world has become irreversibly interdependent” (Fagan 2008: 14). As a matter of fact, there is no limit to the extent an individual, group or institution can go in a bid to exchange culture and education on one hand because, “Culture and Education are inseparable, as they are simply two sides of the same coin. The two concepts can in fact be said to be indistinguishable, as the primary definition of Education is Acculturation” Obanya (2005: 2), and cultural exchange on the other hand becomes inevitable because, “just as there is no such thing as a “pure race,” there is likewise no “pure culture.” That is, cultures influence one another, and even minority cultures and those with less status have an impact

CHAPTER 7

Educational and Cultural Exchange Programme within the ECOWAS: The University of Ilorin Experience

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Abstract

In the world of today, educational and cultural exchanges can serve as vehicles through which institutions can ride to global recognition. This is because, for wider communication in the global world that has virtually become a global village, educationists have come to realize that partnerships through joint academic ventures will not only facilitate teaching and learning, but also enhance and promote cross-cultural activities. The University of Ilorin, which is our institution of reference, has signed a number of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with various Universities around the world in its quest to meet up with the global trends. As such, this paper examines the aims and objectives of educational and cultural exchange within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) through the University of Ilorin experience. It also analyses the prospects and challenges of students' exchange programmes. It concludes by suggesting various ways of sustaining and improving the institution's already established programs.

Key Words: MoU, cultural barriers, education, exchange programmes, ECOWAS

Introduction

It is not uncommon to think of learning as something that takes place in schools, but much of human learning occurs outside the classroom. Although, education starts informally from home but there's always need to go to school to formalize our knowledge through basic academic subjects such as Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. We