

on majority cultures, sometimes in dramatic ways" (Nieto, 1999: 131).

The issue of cultural influence is examined in the later part of this paper with particular reference to the University of Ilorin. Although, our focus is on West Africa, we are also inspired by the views of Clarke (1993: 1):

Education for a new reality in the African world must be an education that enables the African to handle all of the wealth producing resources of Africa. An education that enables the African to manage and market these resources and an education that enables him/her to prepare the generations still to come to do the same thing. A large number of African children should be chosen at birth and trained towards these ends and all education should be for the total sovereignty of African people. There is nothing in African traditional values that prohibits modernism, upward mobility, or the use of science and technology. Africans must realize that they live in a modern technical world and that there are lessons we can draw from our ancient societies to guide us. Africa has to move with the age in which it finds itself in order to survive.

With this assertion, Clarke tends to sum up the importance of education in general and to Africans in particular, the same view point we shared in this article.

In this paper, aside the examination of the aims and objectives of educational and cultural exchanges within the ECOWAS using the University of Ilorin experience as a case study, we also analysed the prospects and challenges of students' exchange programs before concluding by suggesting various ways of improving and sustaining the institution's already established program. We proceed by looking

at the concepts of the key words in this paper: Education, culture, exchange and ECOWAS.

Education, Culture and Exchange

Generally speaking, education is an informative experience because it is developed from human struggle for survival and enlightenment, Gutek (2012). It is the process of imparting and acquiring knowledge through teaching and learning. Informal education is the general social process through which human beings acquire the knowledge and skills needed to function in their culture. On the other hand, formal education is the process by which teachers instruct students in courses of study within institutions. This is to say that, education simply means the imparting and acquiring of knowledge through teaching and learning, especially at a school or similar institution. It is regarded as a means not only of inculcating established views but also of enlarging the existing body of knowledge.

In the words of Frederick Erickson cited by Nieto (1999:137) "Culture can be thought of as a construction – it constructs us and we construct it." Nieto further reiterated that: "Culture, then, is not a passive legacy, but an active operation that takes place through contact and interactions with others. Culture is a social construction because it cannot exist outside of social contact and collaboration." In fact, "Culture, we are told, is 'dynamic.'" Every culture develops "by borrowing, by adapting" Obanya, (2005:5).

Microsoft Student Encyclopedia (2008) describes Students Exchange Programs as, academic programs that give students the opportunity to study in a foreign country; Edgerton (1976: 8) opines that there are many types of educational exchange. According to him, "International education is not necessarily limited to the pursuit of a degree or to a postdoctoral research or teaching fellowship. Numerous international programs exist which have education as a partial component, or which provide an educational experience outside the confines of the classroom and laboratory." This suggests that student exchange programs are offered through schools, educational foundations, and