

**Education for the Integration of West Africa: The
Case of Collaboration of Education Faculties in West
Africa (CEFWA).**

By

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Introduction

The continued interest in regional integration and cooperation is a worldwide phenomenon, inspired probably by the success of the European experience. It also reflects a growing recognition of the benefits derived from regional unity and cooperation especially in meeting the challenges posed by increasingly competitive global market.

Regional integration should not just be seen as an economic issue; it should be seen as a social construction, not limited to the expansion of regional trade but it should include creating societies based on knowledge, values and ethics. This is where education comes in.

Regional integration and Education are both critical to socio-economic development and are mutually supportive. Regional integration provides the opportunity for member states to pool their resources and to also collaborate, thereby becoming more efficient in implementing policies and projects. On the other hand, education provides the platform for research and innovation to support the process of integration and socio-economic development of member states. The Collaboration of Education Faculties in West Africa CEFWA is a bold

attempt at regional harmonization of faculties of education and other related institutions with a few to fostering regional integration.

Background

At the instance of the former Vice Chancellor of the University of Ilorin Prof. Ishaq Oloyede, CEFWA was conceived as part of the response to some of the resolutions at a strategic dialogue organized by the British Council on the “Prime Minister Initiative 2 in October 2008. The objective of the dialogue was essentially to foster a strategic collaboration between the UK and Nigerian universities at policy and institutional levels in areas of joint priorities. Prof. Ishaq Oloyede in company of Prof. D.O Durosaro who was Dean of Education at the time attended the strategic dialogue. It was at this meeting that the idea of CEFWA was first mooted.

Initially the collaboration started with two Faculties of Education from two Nigerian Universities whose Deans were present at the strategic dialogue – the University of Ilorin (Prof. D.O Durosaro) and the University of Lagos (Prof. Mrs. O.O. Busari). Thus Prof. Durosaro working with Prof. Busari became the linchpin for the formation of CEFWA. The two Faculties of Education (from University of Ilorin and the University of Lagos) in 2009 jointly organized the 1st International Conference of the Collaboration of Education Faculties in West Africa CEFWA. The maiden conference took place at the University of Ilorin and it was very well attended.

Vision and Objective of CEFWA

The vision of CEFWA is to create a platform for networking and collaboration among teacher educators and trainers in the area of research, policy, curriculum development, and teaching with a view to raising the standard of education, teacher proficiency and competence among higher education scholars, policy makers and practitioners in the West Africa sub-region. This is in recognition of the fact that teachers are not only a means to implementing education goals; they are the key to sustainability and national capacity in achieving learning and creating societies based on knowledge, values and ethics. Besides, it is now a known fact that no nation can rise above the level and quality of her teachers.

The specific objectives of CEFWA include the following: -

-  To promote academic and professional networking and collaboration among Faculties of Education and similar institutions in the West Africa Sub-region;
-  To promote cooperation, integration and collaboration through staff and student exchange programs, collaborative research efforts, capacity building in West Africa Sub-region
-  To promote cooperation in the area of curriculum development, post graduate training, quality assurance in all areas of teacher training and practice within the Sub-region.
-  To promote and disseminate research information through different publications, workshops, seminars etc. among member institutions in the Sub-region.

- ✚ To carry out advocacy efforts aimed at improving proper management and implementation of educational policies, and ensure that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within the Sub-region.
- ✚ To promote gender and social equity in the education sector in the Sub-region;

Evolution of CEFWA

The Collaboration, which started with two Faculties of Education from two Universities, after its first International Conference in 2009 added three other Universities namely the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; IBB University, Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria; and the Osun State University, Oshogbo, Nigeria. As at the last count after the 6th International Conference held at Abia State University in Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria this year, the Collaboration of Education Faculties in West Africa has recorded a membership of 20 including the Universities of Cape coast Ghana, Catholic University Sierra-Leone, University of Ibadan, and Ahmadu Bello University Zaria among several others.

A major platform for the activities of the CEFWA is the annual International Conferences. The conferences are opportunities for teacher educators at the tertiary levels, educators, researchers, educational administrators, policy makers etc. to network, share research findings and best practices, and collaborate in any area including exchange programs. It is also worthy of mention at this point

that the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria TRCN has been active participants at the CEFWA International Conferences so far organized.

The Conferences organized so far by CEFWA are listed below: -

- ✚ 1st International conference of CEFWA – Theme: Higher education and Globalization, which took place at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. 12th – 16th July 2009.
- ✚ 2nd International Conference of CEFWA – Theme: Teacher Education – Trends, Innovation, and Integration, which took place at the University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria. 17th – 21st October. 2011
- ✚ 3rd International Conference of CEFWA – Theme: Global Best Practices in Teacher education, which took place at the Ibrahim Babangida University IBBU Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria 24th – 28th September 2012.
- ✚ 4th International Conference of CEFWA – Theme: Contemporary issues in Teacher Education and Management, which took place at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana, 9th – 13th September 2013.
- ✚ 5th International Conference of CEFWA – Theme: Education, Innovations, policy and Challenges, which took place at the Osun State University, Oshogbo, Nigeria 18th – 12th September 2014.
- ✚ 6th International Conference of CEFWA - Theme: Challenges of Higher Education in the 21st Century in West Africa, which took

place at Abia State University, Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria
September 21st- 25th, 2015.

The CEFWA International Conferences so far organized are usually very well attended by university lecturers. The large attendance demonstrates the importance placed on CEFWA by scholars in the participating countries.

Publications of CEFWA

A major focus of CEFWA is the creation of a platform for the collation and dissemination of research findings among researchers in education in the universities in the sub-region. This has become an important source of intellectual discuss among education scholars in the member states. CEFWA places very high premium on its publications as these have really fostered the much-desired collaboration.

The main publication of CEFWA is the annual “Research Journal of the Collaboration of Education Faculties in West Africa” – An Official Publication of the Collaboration of Education Faculties in West Africa CEFWA. The Journal started out in 2009 as the “Journal of Research in Education” but the title of the Journal was later changed to “Research Journal of the Collaboration of Education Faculties in West Africa”. Five editions of the journal have been produced so far.

Along with the Journal is the Edited Conference Proceedings, which is produced after every conference to highlight the paper presentations including the keynote address and lead paper presentations. The

Journal and the Conference Proceedings are well subscribed by educators and scholars in Ghana and Nigeria.

In addition to the Edited Conference Proceedings a book titled “Higher Education & Globalisation” Edited by Prof. D.O. Durosaro and Prof. A.A. Adegoke was published in 2011 by Stirling-Horden Publishers Ltd. Lagos, Ibadan for CEFWA. Efforts are being made to publish a second book.

Challenges and Prospects of CEFWA

Against the background that integration among higher education institutions in various regional economic blocks in Africa is generally very low, the Collaboration of Faculties of Education in West Africa CEFWA holds very great promise for the integration and development of education in the West Africa sub-region. If the Collaboration gets the required support from member states in the sub-region the potentials for strengthening teacher education as a basis for sustainable education are enormous.

Africa’s gross enrollment in tertiary institutions of learning is the lowest of any region in the world - barely over 8 percent (UNESCO, 2011). The average enrollment rate for developing countries is 23 percent, and for advanced countries is 74 percent. Africa’s poor showing in higher education is both a cause and effect of the regions poor economic environment.

The lack of high quality tertiary level education has starved Africa of high skills needed for efficient allocation of factors of production thereby stunting improvement in productivity, high value addition and research and development. The one option Africa is faced with is to leverage on the synergy among member states particularly at regional levels that can lead to educational development. The Collaboration of Faculties of Education in West Africa offers a great opportunity in this direction.

There are a number of challenges on how to mobilize support and membership for the collaboration among member states in the sub-region. There are also challenges relating to bridging the gap between Francophone, and Anglophone higher education systems. As at the present CEFWA is mainly focused on Anglophone Education Faculties. Efforts are on to extend the Collaboration to French speaking countries in the Sub-region.

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