
Investigating the Plights of Nigerians in Diaspora: A Case Study of Nigerians Studying in Malaysian Universities

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Abstract

In view of the researchers' personal experiences between 2016-2017, this study investigated the plights of Nigerians in diaspora with a specific focus on Nigerians studying in Malaysian universities. The research design adopted for the study was a qualitative method with a case study approach (interview and observation). 10 Nigerian students studying in three Malaysian universities participated in the study. Interview protocol tagged "Interview Protocol on Plights of Nigerians in Diaspora (IPPND)" was used to collect data from the participants while observation was designed to elicit relevant information in all the selected universities. Data were analyzed qualitatively to find the common themes. The findings revealed that Nigerians were faced with numerous challenges including apathetic attitude of Nigerian embassy in Malaysia, lack of part-time job opportunities, high exchange rates, and visa issues. Additionally, our findings suggested solutions to the problems of Nigerians such as fast responses to students' challenges by the Nigerian embassy, availability of part-time job opportunities for Nigerians and issuance of 2 years visa. The study recommends that Nigerian embassy in Malaysia should have a comprehensive list of Nigerians that are schooling in various Malaysian institutions with a view to enable them to have an accurate data gathering of their citizens.

Keywords

Diaspora, Malaysian universities, Nigerian students, qualitative approach

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Introduction

Education remains the bedrock to a successful life. It is the process of acquiring knowledge, values, ethics and norms with a view to become a better citizen in the society (Umar, 2014). People acquire education so that they can be self-reliant, and contribute their quota to the development of the society. Internationalization of higher education is one of the dynamism of globalization which has reduced institutions of higher learning to a global village by facilitating teaching and learning across Nations and Continents. The impact of globalization and internationalization on higher education has created a market for the active recruitment of international students, especially in Asia (Caldwell & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2016; Esenturk, Demir, Yilmaz & Ilhan, 2016; Kadouf, 2017; Manzuma-Ndaaba, Harada, Romle, & Shamsudin, 2016; Owoyemi, Din, Sabri, & Sani, 2015).

From the global statistical index, the number of international students has increased from 28.6 million as at 70's to 152.5 million in 2007. Indeed, this growth was found in East Asian countries and pacific nations. In the case of Nigerian students, almost 4.3 million chose to study in foreign countries in 2011 (Manzuma-Ndaaba et al., 2016). In fact, globalization is the bedrock that accelerates internationalization of education worldwide. This trend has great impact on international students to interact with their partners from different nations at the host country. For instance, students across the planet would meet with each other for the purposed of education. Globalization has come up with new version for making students as human capital because globalization process has been manifested by new knowledge and information flow (Chikezie & Sabri, 2017; Olutayo, 2016). Knowledge has become the most valuable commodity in the present global economy, which is entirely different from previous international economies. Therefore, globalization has cemented the ground for the interaction and interconnection within international student at the global arena. Thus, the number of investigations into the process that influence international student's decision for higher education abroad has increased due to globalization and a rising competition in the higher education sector (Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010; Umar, 2014; Umar, Noon, & Abdullahi, 2014).

On two factors behind students' interest in schooling abroad, it was characterized on push and pull factors. From the perspective of push factor, the reason behind was started since colonial era which most of the developing countries were not provided with standard universities. This has paved the way for sending their students to obtain higher education in developed societies like UK, US and France etc. because, from 1960's-1970's there was international students from eighteen developing countries studying in US alone. This was accentuated due to the negligence of colonial government to promote higher education in some parts of African continent (Teferra & Albach, 2003). The colonial policy of sending students from their colonies to their metropolis is well known in UK, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and Portugal. This would enable them to acquire higher university education over there. This would ensure them to train the colonies in order to assist the white men administering the colonies (Umar et al., 2014). In fact, some colonial powers like Belgium had completely prohibited the higher education in their colonized states, while Spain, Portugal and France have a limited number for the enrolment of Africans into higher

education (Albach, 2003; Albach, 2004; Teferra & Albach, 2003). Although, lack of access to higher education in developing societies, is the pull factor for international students, couple with the perception that there is better quality system of education in abroad. This was due to the availability of technological facilities and technology based program. These factors had attracted most of the international students especially Africans to go to foreign countries for higher education (Phang, 2012; Sola & Olukoya, 2011).

On push factors, the push factors comprise proximity to the countries; quality of education and reputation of the institutions; available program and courses in line with the interest or area of specialization for the international students; and quality of their academic staff among others (Phang, 2012). However, some micro-economic obstacles like security, cost of living, level of infrastructural development, visa policy, religion, climatic condition, and commonality of language were also the pull factors (Mazzarol & Sautar, 2008; Manzuma-Ndaaba et al., 2016; Umar et al., 2014). These factors contribute immensely to the African students and Nigerians in particular to travel outside for higher education. In the case of Malaysian attraction, it reveals that certain important factors such as affordable school fees, political stability, geographical location, relaxed visa policies and average living expenses in Malaysia have continued to attract a wide range of students from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. These were among the motivating factors that made Nigerian students to come down to Malaysian universities in furtherance of their higher education (Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, 2009).

Meanwhile, reliable figures of Nigerians living abroad is generally lacking due to poor record keeping on the part of the Nigerian authorities. Host countries' figures are also incomplete because many of the countries do not take into consideration naturalized and second generation Nigerians in immigrants statistics (Sola & Olukoya, 2011). According to Organization of Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) statistics, it is claimed that about 1.2million Nigerians reside abroad, the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs gives an estimate of about 20 million Nigerian residents in Europe and the United States of America. Despite the unreliability of the above statistics, one fact that is very clear is that a huge number of Nigerians are resident abroad and that more or less; this category of people constitutes the Nigerian diaspora (Adebayo, 2010). Nigerians' search for education cannot be overemphasized. With a population of over 180 million which makes it Africa's demographic giant, Nigeria has become increasingly involved in international migration worldwide in search for education to cater their national and individual needs. The quest for quality education often made Nigerians to seek for the acquisition of foreign certificates. Due to the dismal state of the Nigerian higher education system, universities in the United Kingdom, North America, Asia and Ghana and South Africa often embarked upon recruitment drives for Nigerian students (Adebayo, 2010; Umar, 2014).

On the number of Nigerians in foreign institutions, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, there are more than 52,000 Nigerians in tertiary education abroad, with some 17,300 in the United Kingdom, 12,000 in Ghana and 7,000 in the United States. These figures are an undercount, given the central bank figures for Ghana, the Institute of International Education's counting of 9,500 Nigerian students in American colleges and

universities, and Project Atlas figures that show 19,000 Nigerian students in the UK (University World News, 2018). In 2016, it was estimated that 13,000 Nigerians were studying at various levels in educational institutions in Malaysia as pointed out by ambassador Datuk Jin Malaysian High Commissioner to Nigeria (Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, 2019; Vanguard Newspaper, 2018). In fact, Malaysian universities continued to be most attracting destinations to the students from Africa, Middle East and other parts of Asia (Umar, et al, 2014). In 2016, figure collected through Centre for International Affairs and Cooperation (CIAC) revealed that University Utara Malaysia (UUM) alone had 500 Nigerians pursuing various degrees (Centre for International Affairs and Cooperation, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 2016). It is reported that Nigerians that are living in China, Malaysia and other foreign countries are faced with various challenges such as exchange rate, cultural dichotomy, adaptation barrier, general financial difficulties, and racial discrimination (University World News, 2018; Vanguard Newspaper, 2018). Despite these challenges, this could not stop them from attending various foreign institutions for advanced programs (Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010).

On the rationale behind the influx of Nigerians in Malaysian institutions, reports indicate that Malaysian universities have attracted numerous Nigerian students due to the affordable tuition fees, cost of living, and easy visa process. Above all, they have high quality of education. This was due to the high standard of facilities, academic manpower and e-learning process. These factors made them to graduate their postgraduate students with sound academic background at stipulated period of time. In fact, it serves as a motivating factor to galvanize the spirit of zealous academic scholars to come up, for completing their academic journey over there (Abdulkadir, 2010; Akhtar, Pratt & Bo, 2015; Farah & Barack, 2019; Khanal & Gaulee, 2019; Mikail, 2016; Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015). In view of the foregoing, the focus of the present study was thus on investigating the plights of Nigerians in diaspora with a particular reference to Nigerians that were studying in Malaysian universities. Specifically, this study was carried out in view of the hardship faced by Nigerian students in Malaysia between 2016-2017. Three research questions were raised to guide the study: (1) Why are Nigerians coming to Malaysia to pursue their degrees? (2) What are the problems faced by Nigerians that are schooling in Malaysian universities? (3) What are the solutions to the problems faced by the Nigerians schooling in Malaysian universities?

Literature Review

Even though an extensive literature review shows that empirical studies on plight of students in foreign countries are limited. Nevertheless, available studies indicate that there are several challenges faced by international students in foreign institutions. They include socio-cultural adaptation, financial problems, academic stress, discrimination or racial discord, safety and among others (Abiddin & Akinyenib, 2015; Haugen, 2013; Umar et al., 2014; University World News, 2020). For instance, Umar et al. (2014) admitted that financial challenges, social and cultural adjustments, family separation, exploitation of landlord and agents and stigmatization on Africans were the challenges confronting African students and

Nigerian students in particular. The studies of Constantine et al., (2004) and Echchabi and Olaniyi (2012) found that most of the debilitating threat against international students includes socio-cultural adjustments, racism or racial discrimination, adaptation to new educational system, pedagogical matters, languages skills, climate condition, system of foods in abroad and financial constraints. Malaklolutunthu and Selan (2011) and Tan Ai Lian (2012) confirmed that international students experienced challenges of adjusting to food, weather, financial arrangement, health care, accommodation and local language, while financial and language limitations add to the difficulties for the new comers. In fact, most of the new students were confronting with these constraints. Meanwhile, job opportunities in Malaysia is very limited, regardless to the postgraduates students to combine studies and work as in the case of US, and some European countries.

Moreover, research conducted by Umar (2014) enumerated some challenges confronting Nigerian postgraduate students in Malaysian universities. These challenges encompass financial constraints; socio-cultural adjustments; separation from families; exploitation or cheating by the landlord and their associates and racial discrimination or stigmatization against African nationals. They have found that the above mentioned threats, intimidating Nigerian students in developing their educational career in Malaysia. They further reveal that the self-sponsored students used to find it very difficult than any other students. While cultural barrier creates a wide gap between indigenous citizens and other expatriates students. The financial constraints have blocked the postgraduate students with families to leave their family at home and come too stay alone. There is discrimination against Nigerians and Africans in general by their nationals. In the same vein, University World News (2020) reported about the perceptions of Tanzanian students in Chinese universities. The study found that the challenges of Tanzanian students that are studying in China and found that language barrier came out as the leading challenge facing the majority of the surveyed trainees. 67% of respondents were trained in English, 19% in Mandarin with English translations and the remaining 14% attended the courses in Mandarin language. The study of Akhtar, Pratt, and Bo (2015) reported several factors in the cross-cultural adaptation of African students in various Chinese universities and concluded that adapting to the culture in China is one of the challenges of African students.

Furthermore, Phang (2012) reported that the international students faced financial and human resources challenges as well as lack of available scholarship for non-EU students. The above study was revealed on international students in European countries. Obviously, there is no provision for scholarship to non-EU candidates. While, in most of the Malaysian universities the scholarship is often limited to few number of students. They only considered those who undertook their previous studies at Malaysia or were opportune and privileged to. Hyams-Ssekasi, Mushibwe, and Caldwell (2014) found that there are challenges for black Africans in accessing foreign education in the United Kingdom. The challenges range from admission issue, visa application, high cost of living, high tuition fee and others. An empirical review of literature conducted by Khanal and Gaulee (2019) on the challenges of international students revealed many challenges faced by international students in their host countries. The challenges include visa issue, funding, discrimination; high cost of living etc.

he concluded that further studies are needed to examine how the challenges can be mitigated so that international students can have good experience in their host countries.

According to University World News (2018) report, between 2016 and 2017, most Nigerian students in Malaysia suffered with financial constraints. This was due to the blocking Nigerian ATM Cards to dispense Malaysian ringgits on the course of fighting corruption and money laundering by the President Buhari's administration. The exchange rate fluctuated and rose up beyond the expectations of students' economic plan because the exchange rate shifted from 56 naira per ringgits in 2015 to 85 naira and above per ringgits in 2016 and 2017 respectively. This tragic economic condition, arose when Malaysian universities started increasing visa renewal fees, accommodation and later tuition fees. This trend has really intimidates the financial transaction of Nigerian students in Malaysia. In support of the foregoing point, Chikezie and Sabri (2017) investigated the financial well-being of Nigerian Students in Universiti Putra Malaysia and concluded that students without sponsorship are facing hard time in Malaysia.

Furthermore, Farah and Barack (2019) have found reasons for African students' quest for Turkish universities and submitted that scholarships and opportunities are the reasons for students' quest for schooling in various Turkish universities. Kadouf (2017) examined the Sudanese students' quest for university education in Malaysia. The outcome of the study indicates several factors which include scholarship, job opportunities and others. The challenges faced by students include discrimination, lack of access to job opportunities and scholarship. Putting the foregoing studies together, thus this study intended to extend the previous studies by examining deeper into the plights of Nigerian students in Malaysian universities with a view to provide measures that can be used to reduce the hardship been faced by the students.

Methodology

Research design, participants, and locale of the study

In this present research, we adopted a case study approach to investigate the study on plight of Nigerians in diaspora with particular focus on Nigerians that were schooling in Malaysian universities so that comprehensive data collection about the study subject matter could be obtained. The qualitative approach of case study is a research method that contains an up-close, in-depth and meticulous exploration of a subject of study and its associated contextual position. The case study approach in qualitative research has been widely used by investigators or researchers for a long period of time and has been applied in different disciplines (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013; Silverman, 2015). It has also been broadly used in social sciences as a qualitative research method to explore modern real-life circumstances and has provided an underpinning of application of thoughts and extension of procedures. Case study approach has several benefits. First, a case study helps in conveying the understanding of a multifaceted issue or object. Second, it has the tendency to extend experience or add strength to the present knowledge via preceding research. Second, the contextual analysis in case study revolves around a narrow number of conditions or events and how they relate

(Creswell, 2015; Peterson & Kim, 2013; Suleiman, Hanafi, & Thanslikan, 2019; Wikiversity, 2015). The participants consisted of Nigerian students pursuing various undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs in Malaysian universities. In order to draw out participants for the study, we employed purposive sampling techniques to select two public universities (Universiti Malaya (UM) and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)) and one private university (Insania University College). Purposive was employed to select ten (10) students from the three selected universities (Creswell, 2015; Creswell, 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The table below shows the three universities and the 10 selected participants for the study.

Table 1. *Name of universities and number of participants selected*

S/N	Name of University	Number of Participant Selected
1	(UUM) (public university)	5
2	(UM) (public university)	3
3	Insania University (private university)	2
	Total	10

Furthermore, following Creswell's (2012) suggestion in selecting participants in research, we have three valid reasons for selecting 5 participants from Universiti Utara Malaysia. First, according to data obtained from the Centre for International Affairs and Cooperation (CIAC now U-Assist) in 2016, the university has over 500 active Nigerian students pursuing various undergraduate and postgraduate students. Second, the university has the highest number of Nigerians more than other universities in Malaysia. Thirdly, those Nigerians studying in the university came from the six geo-political zones (north-west, north-east, north-central, south -south, south-east and south-west) of the country. Therefore, for having such number of Nigerian students, we concluded that we will be able to get sufficient information that will help to investigate the current study. In addition, as at December, 2015, documents collected indicate that Universiti Malaya (UM) has more than 300 Nigerians studying various programmes. Lastly, Insania University College has Nigerian students but it is not up to students in Universiti Utara Malaysia and Universiti Malaya.

Data collection and analysis

In order to get proper and sufficient information on the plights of Nigerian students in Malaysian universities, interview and observation methods were used to collect relevant information from the 10 selected participants. The interview protocol tagged "Interview Protocol on Plights of Nigerians in Diaspora (IPPND)" was developed mainly for the study. Specifically, we used observation method to complement the findings obtained through the interview method as suggested by Creswell (2015). However, three reasons justify the use of interview method to collect data. First, interview method is a commonly used method of gathering vital information from interviewee on a particular subject matter. Second, interview method contains vital information that interviewer will use as a guide to elicit relevant data from the interviewee. Lastly, interview method covers essential questions to be asked. It contains semi-structured open-ended questions (Creswell, 2012). Trustworthiness

has grown to be a vital concept as it allows researchers to explain the merits of qualitative terms outside of the parameters which are commonly used in quantitative research. The main purpose of trustworthiness in qualitative study is to support the argument that the inquiry's outcomes are "worth paying attention to" (Creswell, 2013). In order to ensure the trustworthiness of data, the interview protocol was given to experts in the field of the study with a view to check the quality and relevance of the questions contained. Thus, the experts' corrections and observations were corrected in the interview guide. Lastly, pilot study was conducted in one university outside the three selected universities for the main study. The essence of pilot study is to ensure reliability of the protocol to be used for the main study. To ensure adequate data collection for the study, we employed two research assistants, who helped us to collect data from the participants. Aside the interview protocol and observation checklist, other materials used to collect data include laptop, digital audio tape, iPad phone, camera, biro, pencil, eraser, exercise book and jotter. The interviews conducted lasted for two months, February-March, 2017. The minimum time spent on interview was 30 minutes while maximum was 40 minutes. The language adopted for the interview is English.

According to Creswell (2013), it is important to transcribe the data collected via a qualitative approach so that views of the participants can be known. This helps researchers to draw conclusion on the matter that is been investigated. In line with Creswell's (2015) suggestion, the present study transcribed the data before starting the analysis because data analysis cannot be performed without transcription. We transcribed the data collected from the participants by listening to voice recordings of the interviews conducted. During this process, loss of any kind of information was avoided by listening repeatedly to the recordings. Laptop, hear piece, jotter, biro, pencil and eraser were used for data transcription. The minimum time spent for transcribing the participants' view is 20 minutes. The transcription produced 20 pages and the data was printed for data codification. In consonance with the study research questions, codifications were carried out by reviewing the data received from the participants. The participants for the study were assigned code. We have two reasons for assigning code to the participants. First, it helps the researchers to identify each participant when analyzing data. Second, it makes data analysis seamless because participants' views are easy to be understood (Creswell, 2012). Table 2 below showing the code assigned to the participants for easy identification.

Table 2. *Participants and code assigned*

Participants	Code Assigned	Participants	Code Assigned
1	DS1	6	MS1
2	DS2	7	MS2
3	DS3	8	MS3
4	DS4	9	BS1
5	DS5	10	BS2

Note: **DS** connotes Doctoral Student; **MS** for Master Student; **BS** for Bachelor Student

Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration is an important issue to be followed when conducting research via a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2013). It is an essential step that researchers must consider when dealing with human beings. Similarly, scholars suggest that participant's privacy must be taken into consideration to allow the researchers to get the needed information they intend to use to investigate a study. In view of the foregoing, before collecting data in the present study, we sought the participants' consent, and the purpose of the study was explained to them. Also, the participants were assured on the confidentiality of the information to be obtained from them.

Findings

It is vital to provide a background of informants in qualitative research; this is also relevant in quantitative research as well. The aim of providing profile of informants is to gain a better understanding of the informants based on their characteristic that formed their character. Another motive for reporting the profile of is to exhibit transparency in research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). In the light of the foregoing, the profile of the informants is explained below:

Table 3. *Informants' profile*

Sex	
Male	8
Female	2
Total	10
Program of Study	
PhD	5
MSc	3
BSc	2
Total	10
Number of participants based on configuration of Nigeria	
Northern Part of Nigeria	5
Southern Part of Nigeria	5
Total	10

As shown in Table 3, the sex of the participants used for the study includes 8 males and 2 females. On programme of study, five (5) are PhD students, three (3) were masters' students, while 2 were undergraduate students. Table 3 indicates that 6 students were selected from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), 2 students from Universiti Malaya (UM), while the remaining 2 students were picked from Insaniah University College. Lastly, in order to avoid bias and to get relevant data from the participants, five students each from southern and northern part of Nigeria that are schooling in Malaysian universities were selected to participate in the study. Furthermore, getting the themes that can gather the codes related to one another is the next stage after the codification of the received data (Esenturk et al.,

2016). That is why Creswell (2015) is of the view that it is essential that the researcher takes research questions of the study into consideration and needs to be conscious of what s/he is looking for in research questions. The words, sentences and paragraphs were coded via conceptualization with the aim of determining the idea wanted to be expressed while the data was read. For this reason, the emerged themes were coded in accordance with the study research questions. The concepts occurring as a result of codification were systematically gathered under a significant theme. At the end of the thematic coding, three main themes and eleven sub-themes emerged. Table below shows the emerged main and sub-themes after data codification.

Table 4. *Thematic coding of the data collected*

Theme One: Reasons for the influx of Nigerians in Malaysian universities
Sub-themes: 1. Exposure 2. Better facilities 3. Scholarship opportunities 4. Career advancement
Theme Two: Problems faced by Nigerians that are schooling in Malaysian universities
Sub-themes: 1. Apathetic attitude of Nigerian embassy in Malaysia 2. Lack of part-time job opportunities for international students 3. High exchange rate 4. Visa issue
Theme Three : Possible solutions to the problems confronting Nigerians in Malaysian universities
Sub-themes: 1. Quick response to students' challenges by Nigerian embassy 2. Availability of part-time job opportunities 3. Issuance of 2 years visa

Reasons for the influx of Nigerians in Malaysian universities

Our data confirmed reasons for the influx of Nigerians in Malaysian universities as the theme one of the study. In the same vein, evidence from the interviews conducted revealed four sub-themes, which formed reasons for the influx of Nigerians in Malaysian universities to pursue bachelor degree, master degree and doctorate degree. The four reasons include exposure, better facilities, scholarship opportunities and career advancement.

Exposure, evidence from the interviews conducted in this study showed that many Nigerians come to Malaysia for studies simply because they want to get more exposure. Views of the participants for the study lend credence to this. For instance, DS1 expressed thus..."the reason for coming to study in Malaysia is to get better exposure in a better

environment that is different from what is obtainable in Nigeria”. The opinions of other participants coincide with the one quoted earlier. According to DS4, he opined thus...”without mincing words, travelling alone is education and exposure itself because you can compare the exposure of people that are schooling in Nigerian institutions with exposure that people that are schooling in Malaysia and other foreign countries will get”. Also, the views of MS1 and BS2 corroborate the foregoing:

“To be candid, we came to Malaysia so as to get exposed to so many things that we lack in Nigeria in terms of education and other related things.” (MS1)

“For instance, coming to Malaysia make us to associate with people from other countries across the continents. So, by establishing connections with those people, you learn to appreciate and respect peoples’ opinions and views about issues.” (BS2)

In view of the above accounts, it can be said that exposure is one of the key reasons responsible for the influx of Nigerians in various Malaysian higher institutions.

Better facilities, our study confirmed that better facilities in Malaysian universities remain one of the reasons why Nigerians troop to Malaysia for studies. Majority of the participants interviewed concur that Malaysian universities are well equipped with first class teaching and learning facilities than what is obtainable in Nigerian universities. According to DS5, he said...”there universities here have uninterrupted power, have quality teaching and learning facilities (e.g. standard library, conducive classroom, etc.) for both undergraduate and postgraduate students”. In the same vein, MS3 said...”universities here in Malaysia cannot be compared with Nigerian universities in terms of facilities. Therefore, we came to Malaysia because of good facilities that Nigerian universities are lacking”. In order to further justify the reason for the influx of Nigerians to Malaysia, BS2 explained thus...”unfortunately, Nigerian universities lack good facilities that can aid students learning, thus justify our reason for coming to abroad for studies so that one can learn in serene and conducive environment.” In addition, aside the interviews conducted which support the participants’ views on better facilities, observation method used to access the facilities in Malaysian universities concur with the interviews conducted. Table below indicates that Malaysian universities have better facilities that attract foreigners to study there.

Table 5. *Observation on availability of facilities in Malaysian Universities*

S/N	Facilities	Better than Nigerian universities	Not better than Nigerian universities
1	Classroom facilities	V	
2	Standard library that is equipped with relevant materials	V	
3	Availability of lecturers	V	

Taken together, it can be said that Nigerians come to study in Malaysian universities because of their good facilities that are in line with international best practices.

Scholarship opportunities, evidence from this study indicates that scholarship opportunities formed another reason why Nigerians are coming to Malaysia for their doctorate, masters and undergraduate programmes. According to DS4... "before coming to Malaysia, we were told of various scholarship opportunities for international students, and we actually got scholarship to run our PhD programmes." MS3 expressed thus... "we came to Malaysia to study because of scholarship and other financial aids opportunities." BS1 explained thus... "scholarship and other opportunities such as research assistant are the reasons why Nigerians are coming to foreign countries (including Malaysia) to further their studies. BS3 said... "sincerely speaking, most Nigerians are here because of scholarship opportunities for international students." In support of the above views enunciated by the participants, observation and documents collected indicates that more than 50 Nigerians benefitted immensely from Universiti Utara Malaysia's (UUM) Scholarship (partial and full scholarship for undergraduate and postgraduate), Research Assistant (RA) and Graduate Teaching Assistance (GRA) opportunities (between 2010-2016). At Universiti Malaya (UM), observation and documents revealed that more than 80 Nigerians were on partial and full scholarship for their studies as at December, 2015. Also, at Insania University College, some Nigerians confessed that they benefitted immensely from the universities' scholarship (partial and full) opportunities such as research Assistant and other financial benefits that are designed for international students.

Career advancement, interviews conducted shows that Nigerians are schooling in Malaysian universities for career advancement. Specifically, those that are doing their master and PhD want to use it to gain promotion and appointments when they come back to where they are working in Nigeria. According to DS2,

"Since lecturers without PhD in Nigerian universities are not recognized and sidelined in scheme of things, then we decided to do our PhD so that we can be recognized and accorded more respect in the university and society where we come from. Basically, we're embarked on PhD programme for career advancement."

In support of the foregoing, DS5 said,

"Since NUC (Nigeria's national universities commission policy states that the minimum qualification for lecturers in Nigerian universities is PhD, we decided to go for PhD programmes so as to improve ourselves and increase our profile."

Also, the view MS3 concurred with other participants on career advancement, he said,

"We're currently running our masters here which we about to complete. We intend to start our PhD immediately after our MSc. We want to ensure that we bag our doctorate degree before returning to our various institutions where we work in Nigeria so that we can get promotion and other benefits accrued to people with PhD certificate."

In support of the above views, observation and data collected revealed that up to 10 Nigerians are lecturers at Universiti Utara Malaysia (as at 2016). In view of the above perspectives given by the participants and other methods used for the study, it clearly shows that career advancement is one of the main reasons why Nigerians travel abroad to further their studies, most especially in Malaysian.

Problems faced by Nigerians who were schooling in Malaysian universities

Data collected clearly indicate that problems faced by Nigerians in Malaysian institutions formed theme two of the present study, as enunciated by the participants selected for study. The problems faced include apathetic attitude of Nigerian embassy in Malaysia towards Nigerians, lack of part-time job opportunities, high exchange rate and visa issue. Participants' views on the four problems are discussed below.

Attitude of Nigerian embassy in Malaysia, empirical evidence from this study revealed that Nigerians studying in Malaysia believed that Nigerian embassy in Malaysia show less concern towards the plights of their citizens as explained by the majority of the participants that participated in this study. According to DS2,

“The Nigerian mission here in Malaysia is not alive to her responsibility, which is funded from the national purse. The levity with which they treat cases involving Nigerians here smacks of sentiment disdain and funding such a mission from our common wealth should be reassessed. Though, we all know that most Nigerians here do not respect Malaysia's laid down policy, nevertheless, our embassy should swing into action whenever there are issues involving Nigerians.”

Similarly, MS3 explained thus...“Nigerian embassy in Malaysia is not doing their job as expected from them. Even to get our expired international passport replaced is a problem. They treat Nigerians with disdain as if they are not from Nigeria.” Also, BS1 said,

“The issue on apathetic attitude of Nigerian embassy towards Nigerians has been for a very long time. They don't care about the plights of Nigerians here at all. Many Nigerians have had series of cases that our embassy needs to wade in, but because of the lackadaisical attitude of our embassy, those issues are yet to be visited.”

Lack of part-time job opportunities, in this study, we found that lack of part-time and full time job opportunities for international students (including Nigeria) as posited by the majority of the participants, who participated in this present study, is one of the challenges facing Nigerian students in Malaysia. According to DS5, he said...“frankly speaking, Nigerians and other international students are not allowed to work in Malaysia as indicated in the visa issued, and this made crimes committed by international students to be high”. In support of the foregoing point, MS2 opined that...“foreign students are not allowed to take up either part-time or full time jobs.” DS4 explained thus,

“The policy here in Malaysia doesn't give room for students to be engaged in either part-time or full time job. Malaysia is not as liberal as USA and UK where they allow

international students to take up part-time jobs either in school or outside the school.”

The above is in consonance with the policy in Malaysia concerning job opportunities. According to the visa policy in Malaysia, it clearly indicates that student-visa issued does not allow international students to engage in any work in Malaysia.

High exchange rate is another issue affecting Nigerians that are schooling in various Malaysian universities, as majority of the participants bare their minds on it. According to DS1 and MS2, they said,

”High exchange rate is a huge challenge for Nigerians that are schooling in various Malaysian higher institutions. Currently, 1 Malaysian ringgit (RM1) is equal to 92 naira (Nigeria’s currency). Last week, it was 1 Malaysian ringgit to 88 naira. This high exchange rate makes life unbearable for us to pay school fees, and other things that are needed to assist us in our education.” (DS1)

“In early 2016, Nigerians in Malaysia and other countries were able to access foreign exchange due to CBN’s position that (Central Bank of Nigeria) the value of the country’s currency, the naira, has plummeted by about 40% since the beginning of the year.” (MS2)

In the same vein, DS3 said,

“High exchange rate is a serious problem that hampers our studies in Malaysia. Some of us are unable to pay our school fees because of the high exchange rate. Most Nigerians here in Malaysia are sponsoring themselves. Few are being sponsored by TETFUND (Tertiary Education Trust Fund) and other interventionist agencies in Nigeria such as PTDF (Petroleum Technology Development Fund).”

In addition to the interview conducted, through observation and documents collected concerning how inaccessibility of foreign exchange affect Nigerians schooling in Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), we found that most students are in active (owing school fees) (Bursary Department, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 2016). The hardship made the executive committee of the Nigerian Community in UUM to interface with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International affairs) of the university with a view to finding a lasting solution to the hardship been experienced by Nigerians.

Visa issue, according to participants used for the study, they conclude that issuance of one year visa to students affect them in one way or the other. According to DS4, he said:

“Issuance of visa is a serious problem for international students here. Firstly, imagine the stress that new students coming to Malaysia for the first time used to pass through. They’ll have to apply for visa with reference (popularly called VWR), which usually take 3 to 4 months before it can be issued. This delay often makes students not to arrive Malaysia early for registration of studies. Also, for those that are already in Malaysia and willing to get their visa renewed, it is also a long process which cost us a lot of money and energy.”

In support of the above point, MS3 explained thus..."application for visa through EMGS has made life unbearable for us in this country." In the same vein, BS2 said,

"Application for visa via EMGS worsens students' situation in Malaysia because of the bureaucratic bottlenecks attached to it. Firstly, for new students to get visa, you have to pass through long and unnecessary process which often delay students' resumption for first registration. Secondly, for those students that are already in Malaysia and willing to renew their visa, they have to go through strenuous procedure before their visa can be issued. This long procedure usually delay students who wish to travel within Malaysia or back to their country could not do so due to visa application that is being delayed by EMGS."

DS5 opined,

"Visa is another issue that affects Nigerians that are studying in Malaysian universities. According to visa policy of Education Malaysian Global Services (EMGS), new students are to be issued a one year student-visa, subject to students' registration at his/her institution. Also, the visa shall be renewed every year, subject to students' continuation of study in Malaysia."

Possible solutions to the problems confronting Nigerians in Malaysian universities

Interviews conducted suggest three possible solutions to the problems confronting Nigerians that are studying in various Malaysian institutions form theme three of this study. They include quick response to students' challenges by Nigerian embassy, availability of part-time job opportunities for students and issuance of 2 years visa policy.

Quick response to students' challenges, participants used for the study opined that staff at the Nigerian embassy needs to be alive to their responsibilities by quickly attend to Nigerians who have lodged their complaints. According to BS1, he said..."there are many petty things (e.g., fighting, discrimination etc) happening to Nigerians in Malaysia that ordinarily should be resolved amicably with the quick intervention of the Nigerian embassy. DS3 explained thus..."honestly, in order to reduce the plights of Nigerians in Malaysia, our embassy should attend and resolve cases involving Nigerians. Lastly, DS5 said..."we expect the newly appointed ambassador to Malaysia to reform the embassy with a view to attend to the needs of Nigerians. They should know that they are posted to Malaysia mainly to ensure positive relationship between the two countries."

Availability of job opportunities, the interviews conducted revealed that part-time job opportunities should be available for students who are schooling in various Malaysian institutions so that crime committed by foreigners will be reduced. According to DS2, he said..."the issue of no job for foreign students should be reviewed by the Malaysian government so that students can engage in part-time jobs as it is been done in other climes. By doing so, crime rate in Malaysia will be drastically reduced to the barest minimum". Similarly, MS2 opined,

”Foreign students should be allowed to take up part-time jobs so that they can use it to sustain themselves. As it is done in the UK, USA, Australia and other countries, Malaysian government adopt the job policy of the said countries so that foreign students involvement in crimes such as cyber-crime, stealing, prostitution and other vices will be curbed.”

In support of the foregoing, BS1 specifically said...”we appeal to Malaysian government to abolish the no-job-policy for foreign students, students should be allowed to do part-time jobs (such as security, hotel attendant, clerk, cleaners etc.) so as to reduce crimes rate in Malaysia.”

Issuance of 2 year-visas, in this study, the interviews conducted indicated that students want the Malaysian government through Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS) to review the visa policy from 1 year to 2 years. According to BS1, he said...”issuance of year visa policy through EMGS should be upwardly reviewed to 2 years so that students will not be subjected to stress in the name of visa renewal on yearly basis”. The foregoing view is supported by DS2, he said...”we go through a lot of bureaucratic bottlenecks in applying for visa every year, so Malaysian government should mandate the EMGS to issue 2 years visa to registered foreign students.”

Discussion

The first research question of the study was why Nigerians are coming to Malaysia to pursue their degrees. Thus the first research objective of the study was to know the reasons why Nigerians are coming to Malaysia for studies. Our findings revealed four reasons why Nigerians preferred Malaysia for studies; they include exposure, better facilities, scholarship opportunities and career advancement. Firstly, on exposure, we found that majority of Nigerians came to Malaysia for studies so that they can be more exposed and establish friendship with people from diverse culture and religious. Secondly, we found that Nigerians chose to study in Malaysian universities because of the country’s better facilities and technological advancement. In order to complement the findings from the interviews, observation method and other documents used for the study indicates that Malaysian universities are well equipped with better facilities, which cannot be compared with universities in Nigeria. As shown in table 5, it indicates that universities in Malaysia have better classroom and library facilities, as well as availability of enough lecturers than Nigerian universities. Thirdly, the interview conducted revealed that Nigerians preferred Malaysia for study because of scholarship opportunities. In addition to the interview, observation method used indicates that Nigerians go for studies in Malaysia so that they can get scholarship. Documents collected showed that Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) offered more than 50 Nigerians scholarship opportunities (both undergraduate and postgraduate, research assistants (RA) and graduate teaching assistance (GTA) (from 2010-2016). Also, our observation and documents collected showed that more than 80 Nigerians benefited from Universiti Malaya’s (UM) various scholarship opportunities. Fourthly, our study found that Nigerians come to study in Malaysian institutions for career advancement. The foregoing is

in consonance with the studies of Kadouf (2017) and Phang (2012) who concluded that lack of access to better facilities in developing countries was the reason why its citizens go for studies abroad because they believe that there was better quality system of education in abroad. Due to lack of access to higher education in some developing countries, coupled with the view that there is better quality system of education in abroad, are responsible for students' quest for more studies, and also exposure to modern teaching and learning facilities is often responsible for it. Specifically, availability of technology based program was one of the factors that attract international students, especially Africans to go to foreign countries to studies. In the same vein, the current findings is also in congruent with the report of Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia (2009) who revealed that certain factors such affordable school fees, relaxed average living expenses in Malaysia have continued to attract a wide range of students from Africa and the Middle East. Report also established that due to availability of good facilities in Malaysian universities, it attracts international students from many countries to study various undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The study of Umar (2014) is also in tandem with the current findings. He found that Malaysian universities have attracted numerous Nigerian students due to the affordable cost of living and school fees and that they have high quality educational facilities that are of international standard.

The second research question was the problems faced by Nigerians that are schooling in Malaysian universities. Thus, the aim of the second research objective of the present study is to identify the problems faced by Nigerians that are schooling in Malaysian universities. Findings from the interviews conducted revealed four problems facing Nigerians in Malaysia. The problems include apathetic attitude of Nigerian embassy towards Nigerians, lack of part-time jobs for international students, high exchange rate and visa issue. Firstly, on apathetic attitude of Nigerian embassy towards Nigerians, evidence from our study revealed that majority of the participants was not happy with the way the Nigerian embassy treat them. Secondly, majority of the participants claimed that there were no part-time job opportunities for foreign students in Malaysia. Thirdly, our findings revealed high exchange rate as another problem confronting Nigerians that are schooling in Malaysian universities. Lastly, we found that participants are not happy with the one year visa policy for international students made by the Malaysian government. The finding is in consonance with the study of Umar (2014) who found that the disheartening attitude of Nigerian embassies in foreign countries (including Malaysia) towards Nigerians is not new. Many cases had been reported in some countries on how Nigerian embassies failed to show concern about the challenges facing Nigerians.

The studies of Echchabi and Olaniyi (2012), Malaklolunthu and Selan (2011), and Phang (2012) support the foregoing findings. They found that many African students that studying in Malaysian institutions was battling with some difficulties. Specifically, they are faced with lack of job opportunities, financial challenges and stigmatization. Also, most of the threat against African students includes socio-racism, pedagogical matters, climate condition, and adaptation to new educational system, pedagogical matters, languages skills and financial constraints. Specifically, they were of the view that international students are

faced with financial challenges as well as inadequate availability of scholarship for non-EU students. Similarly, the current finding is also consistent with the University World News (2018), whose report indicates that there were many Nigerian students in Malaysian universities that are having financial restraints. This was due to unfavorable policy by the Nigerian government on foreign exchange, where students' ATM Cards were unable to dispense Malaysian ringgits. The exchange rate was consistently fluctuates and rise up beyond the expectations of students economic plan where 56 naira was equivalent to 1 ringgits in 2015 to 85 naira and above per ringgit in 2016 & 2017 respectively. Report further indicates that the economic condition arises when Malaysian universities started increasing tuition fees, accommodation fees and visa renewal fees. This development has really intimidates the financial transaction of Nigerian students in Malaysia. The current findings are synonymous with the work of Chikezie and Sabri (2017) who conducted study on the financial well-being of Nigerian in Malaysia and found that students without sponsorship are facing hardship in Malaysian universities due to high tuition fee, high exchange rate among others. In addition, Akhtar, Pratt, and Bo (2015) reported several factors in the cross-cultural adaptation of African students in various Chinese universities which include language barrier, high cost of living, and discrimination.

The third research question of the study was based on solutions to the problems faced by Nigerians schooling in Malaysian universities. The third research objective of the study was to proffer possible solutions to the problems faced by Nigerians that are schooling in Malaysia. Our findings revealed three possible solutions to the problems faced by Nigerians in Malaysia. As suggested by the participants used for the study, the three solutions include quick response to students' challenges by Nigerian embassy, availability of part-time job opportunities and issuance of 2 years visa. Firstly, on quick response to students' challenges by the Nigerian embassy, participants agreed that embassy should be responsive and responsible to the plights of Nigerians so that issues involving them can be resolved amicably without further delay. Secondly, participants are of the view that Malaysian government should review the no-job-policy for international students that are schooling in Malaysian institutions, by allowing them to take up part-time job opportunities like hotel attendant, cleaner, and store keeper. Thirdly, study found that issuance of 2 years visa for Nigerians and other international students that are schooling in Malaysian institutions will help to douse the challenges being experienced by them. Specifically, participants are of the view that EMGS should be mandated by the Malaysian government for upward review of the visa policy from the current 1 year visa to 2 year visa. The findings are in sync with the study of Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015) on the current trends, challenges and prospects of student mobility in the African higher education landscape. The study concluded that policies regarding mobility of students in higher institutions in Africa should be flexible and encouraging for easy access of opportunities for students in African countries. The current findings are also in line with the study of Farah and Barack (2019) that established various reasons for African students' high quest for Turkish universities and concluded that scholarships and access to job opportunities are responsible for university education in Turkey.

Conclusion and Implications

Based on the findings, this study has successfully provided answers to all the three research questions formulated for the study, while the three research objectives were achieved. Therefore, it can be said that even though majority of Nigerians are schooling in Malaysia because of exposure, scholarship opportunities, better facilities and career advancement, nevertheless, their plights in Malaysia is excruciating and disheartening to note. Their plights includes apathetic attitude of the Nigerian embassy, lack of job part-time job opportunities, high exchange rate and visa issue. In view of the foregoing findings and based on our personal experiences and observation on the plights of Nigerians in Malaysia, the following recommendations were made:

- (1) In order to reduce numerous crimes committed by international students in Malaysia, Malaysian government should as a matter of importance, review the no-job-policy with a view to enable foreign students to engage in part-time jobs. Students' intention to survive in the country often makes them to engage in illegal activities such as cybercrime and other social vices.
- (2) In order to attract more international students to Malaysian universities, issuance of visa with reference (VWR) by Education Malaysian Global Services (EMGS) should be processed within two to three weeks so that prospective students will be able to use the letter to fast-track their application for visa at the Malaysian embassy in their countries. In addition, upward review of visa renewal from 1 to 2 years is necessary to stem students' challenges within and outside Malaysia.
- (3) More scholarship (partial and full) opportunities should be provided for international students, so as to reduce crimes and increase the current rankings of Malaysian universities.
- (4) Nigerian embassy in Malaysia should endeavor to have a comprehensive list of Nigerians schooling in various Malaysian institutions with a view to enable the embassy to have an accurate data. By doing so, the embassy will be able to use the data to attend to students' requests at all times.
- (5) Nigerians in Malaysian universities should shun acts that could tarnish the image of Nigeria. Specifically, students should not involve in crimes such as drug trafficking and other related vices.

Despite the fact that the study on the plight of Nigerians in diaspora was investigated with both interview and observation methods, where interesting findings were found, nevertheless, there are some suggestions for future researchers who might be interested in working on similar study. For instance, since the present study limited the participants to 10 students across selected public and private universities in Malaysia, future study on plight of Nigerians in Malaysia could employ survey method to collect relevant data from large number of students to see whether their findings will support or discountenance the present findings. Better still, both survey and interview could be used to examine students' perception on plights of Nigerians in Malaysian universities with a view to getting

comprehensive information to draw meaningful inferences. An investigation is needed to examine the causes of rising cases of Nigerian students' involvement in sharp practices in Malaysia. Specifically, a comparative study on the plight of Nigerian students in other countries in Asia such as Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, and Philippines could be studied to juxtapose the perceptions of Nigerians within the stated countries. Lastly, study could be conducted to examine the plights of other African students in Malaysia with a view to proffer lasting solutions to their challenges.

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