

Interculturalizing Ethiopian Universities: Between Initiation and Institutionalization

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Abstract : The study is set in Ethiopia, a sub-Saharan multilingual, multiethnic African country, which has seen a significant increase in the number of universities in recent years. The aim of this growth is to provide access to education for all cultural and linguistic groups across the country. However, there are challenges in promoting intercultural competence among students in this diverse context. The aim of the study is to investigate the interculturalization of Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions as perceived by university lecturers and administrators. In particular, the study aims to determine the level of support for this educational innovation and gather suggestions for its implementation and institutionalization. The researchers employed semi-structured interviews with administrators and lecturers from two large Ethiopian universities to gather data. Thematic analysis was utilized for coding and analyzing the interview data, with the assistance of the NVIVO software. The findings obtained from the grounded analysis of the interview data reveal that while there are opportunities for interculturalization in the curriculum and campus life, support for educational innovation remains low. Administrators and lecturers also emphasize the government's responsibility to prioritize interculturalization over other educational innovation goals. The study contributes to the existing literature by examining an under-researched population in an under-researched context. Additionally, the study explores whether Western perspectives of intercultural competence align with the African context, adding to the theoretical understanding of intercultural education. The data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with administrators and lecturers from two large Ethiopian universities. The interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of the participants' views on interculturalization in higher education. Thematic analysis was applied to the interview data, allowing for the identification and organization of recurring themes and patterns. The analysis was conducted using the NVIVO software, which aided in coding and analyzing the data. The study addresses the extent to which administrators and lecturers support the interculturalization of Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions. It also explores their suggestions for implementing and institutionalizing intercultural education, as well as their perspectives on the current level of institutionalization. The study highlights the challenges in interculturalizing Ethiopian universities and emphasizes the need for greater support and prioritization of intercultural education. It also underscores the importance of considering the African context when conceptualizing intercultural competence. This research contributes to the understanding of intercultural education in diverse contexts and provides valuable insights for policymakers and educational institutions aiming to promote intercultural competence in higher education settings.

Keywords : administrators, educational change, Ethiopia, intercultural competence, lecturers

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