# MAKING SENSE OF LIBERAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF FACULTY PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

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In the past few decades, scholars have taken note of the spread of "American-style" liberal education curricula and programs to numerous foreign higher education systems around the world. The nascent literature on liberal education's global diffusion however has examined some international contexts, including sub-Saharan Africa, less comprehensively than others. Furthermore, empirical research is limited on the mechanisms by which liberal education programs are adapted and enriched by local actors and institutions to acclimate curricula to their own milieus overtime and in practice. In order to begin filling in the gaps in this discourse, this qualitative case study examines the sensemaking and agency of liberal education faculty at a West African higher education institution, the University of Nigeria Nsukka's School of General Studies. This research addresses the following questions: (1) what are the forces that influenced the initial development of and ongoing adjustments to the General Studies curriculum at the University of Nigeria, (2) how do faculty in the School of General Studies make sense of these forces, and (3) how do General Studies faculty exercise agency in their curricular work as they negotiate making sense of these forces? A 'glonacal' perspective on curricular change (that is, that the forces influencing curricula, as well as faculty sensemaking and agency, simultaneously arise, flow, and interact globally, nationally, and locally) underpins the theoretical lens brought to bear in answering these questions and generating findings.

This study draws data from primary institutional documents from the University of Nigeria Nsukka, secondary sources written by and/or about General Studies faculty and their

curriculum, semi-structured qualitative interviews with faculty members, and reflections on field research conducted by the author in Nsukka. Findings include a series of interconnected yet oft competing global, national, and local forces that have influenced the General Studies curriculum at the University of Nigeria from the 1960s to the present. The varying significance ascribed to these forces by front-line curricular agents in contemporary curricular work at the School of General Studies was elucidated through ongoing engagement with General Studies faculty. These finding indicate that while the salience assigned by faculty to some forces, namely at the global level, fluctuates across actors depending on their disciplinary backgrounds, content areas, and beliefs, attentiveness to national forces (imbricated with local forces), pertaining to the needs and priorities of Nigeria, is ubiquitous within the School of General Studies. By historizing General Studies at the University of Nigeria and interrogating this history through the sensemaking and agency of local liberal educators, this study provides a framework for exploring liberal education, and discussions of it, in sub-Saharan Africa in a more authentic and inclusive way.

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## Introduction

At the collegiate level, liberal education is a curricular model intended to provide students with a broad foundation of knowledge spanning the various domains of human inquiry in addition to in-depth knowledge in their areas of specialization (AAC&U, n.d.; Godwin & Altbach, 2016). Proponents of this curricular tradition assert that it "empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change" in an ever more pluralistic, interconnected and rapidly globalizing world through the development of social responsibility and transferable skills (AAC&U, n.d.). Furthermore, these same competencies have been advanced as preparing today's students for the increasingly complex and interdisciplinary world of work, a contention born out in studies of work force outcomes and employer preferences (AAC&U, 2020; Rossman, Wilson, Alamuddin, Karon, Joo, & Hill, 2020). However, despite the numerous benefits of liberal learning promised by its advocates, in practice liberal education is generally considered a near-exclusively American curricular concept (Godwin, 2013; Nussbaum, 2004; Rothblatt, 2003). Conventional wisdom among higher education scholars and practitioners has long held that, outside of the USA, narrowly vocational and specialized curricula "have been the… global norm… in the past several centuries," especially in developing and formerly colonized regions of world (Godwin & Altbach, 2016, p. 5).

That said, in the early 21st century higher education (HE) researchers in the USA have started drawing attention to the appearance of liberal education in other regions and education systems around the world (Boyle, 2019a; Gillespie, 2001; Godwin, 2013; Marber & Araya, 2017; Peterson, 2012). This phenomenon, though still on the periphery of the postsecondary landscape in most countries, has taken hold in places as culturally dissimilar and geographically

distant as, “Russia, India, Ghana, China, Israel, the Netherlands, Chile, Bangladesh, and Brazil—places where it has rarely existed before” (Godwin, 2015b, p. 2). Yet, scholars working in this new area of inquiry have explored liberal education programs and initiatives in some regions less fully than others. For instance, in this nascent discourse a consensus has emerged that sub-Saharan Africa is home to relatively few liberal education programs—some researchers argue as few as four! (Godwin, 2013, 2018b)—that all appeared in just the past few decades (Cross & Adams, 2012; Godwin, 2013; Lilford, 2012). This consensus contrasts sharply with the history of my research topic, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka’s (UNN) General Studies (GS) curriculum, that is conspicuously underreported upon in the present USA-based literature. Despite recent scholarship contending that liberal education is overlooked by most national governments (Boyle, 2019b) and struggles for legitimacy in most non-USA contexts (Godwin, 2017a; 2018a), the GS curriculum has been a central component of the undergraduate experience at UNN since its inception in 1961 (Petitt, 1969) and has in the decades since been promoted across Nigerian HE by the national government (Ogbeide, 2018).

General Studies, Nigeria’s own take on liberal education for undergraduates, was first developed at UNN, the nation’s premier land-grant university, through the collaborative efforts of Nigerian, American, and British educators. In the 1960s, advisors from Michigan State University (MSU) traveled to Nsukka to help establish this new institution, the first of its kind on the continent. Among the various innovative programs developed in collaboration with MSU, UNN was the first Nigerian university to adopt a general education curriculum that offered a broad liberal education informed by the American tradition. Less than a decade after the founding of UNN, the advisors from MSU were forced to leave Nigeria due to the onset of the Nigerian Civil War (Ezeocha, 1977; Nwosu, 2017a; Petitt, 1969). However, in the succeeding

decades the GS curriculum at UNN not only persisted, but continued to develop independent of Western involvement. Today, virtually every university in Nigeria includes GS courses patterned after UNN's example, and these are deemed "liberal education" by the Nigerian government (National Universities Commission, 2014), by the institutions that deliver the curricula (University of Ibadan, 2018b; University of Nigeria, n.d.), and by Nigerian scholars (Nweke & Nwoye, 2016).

By overlooking the case of GS at UNN, intentionally or otherwise, Western chroniclers of liberal education's recent global spread have shortchanged the entire discourse on this topic and delivered an overly simplistic narrative of liberal education in Africa. For instance, Lilford (2012, 2017), providing a history of liberal education on the continent, contends the "Nsukka model" of general education has not been propagated in Nigeria, forgetting that GS has in fact been promulgated by the Nigerian government for decades and is ubiquitous at Nigerian universities (Ogbeide, 2018). So, while I disagree with the contention that GS has not proliferated and had an impact in Nigeria, I do concur that it has not received the thorough analysis it deserves in the USA. This study takes the first step toward rectifying this paucity of analysis. In doing so, I hope to both provide a counterargument to the presumed dearth of liberal education programs in sub-Saharan Africa acknowledged so far by Western liberal education researchers (Godwin, 2013), and bring attention to an enduring African model of liberal education that deserves recognition in its own right.

In this chapter, I begin by delineating the problem that my study addresses and establish my topic's significance in relation to the contemporary literature on liberal education globally. Next, I discuss some key background concepts that informed my work and introduce the theoretical framework that I employ throughout this research. Chapter 2 is dedicated to

reviewing (1) the American literature on the worldwide spread of liberal education curricula, and (2) the Nigerian literature on GS, paying particular attention to UNN. In Chapter 3 I outline the methods of data collection and analysis that I utilized in my study and speak to the reliability and trustworthiness of my work.

## Statement of the Problem

Liberal education, as it has heretofore been discussed and conceived, is incontrovertibly a product of the Western academy. From its roots in classical Greece and maturation in the universities of Europe (Godwin & Altbach, 2016) to its present status as an "American obsession" (Rothblatt, 2003, p. 1), liberal education remains deeply rooted in Western knowledge systems and disciplinary traditions. As liberal education is swept up in the tide of globalization and spreads to new, non-Western contexts it is liable to carry with it a reification of Western knowledge at the expense of other ways of knowing and being (Godwin, 2015a). Antithetically, even as the adoption of liberal education in new contexts has accelerated, African scholars, along with comparative educationists critical of Western cultural imperialism, have called for decolonizing and indigenizing postsecondary curricula across Africa (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Heleta, 2016; LeGrange, 2016). Such anti-colonial appeals are advanced in order to counter the coercive effects of Western-dominated globalization (De Wit, 2019; Teferra, 2019) and re-center the continent's own epistemologies, ontologies, and content areas (Poitras Pratt, Louie, Hanson, & Ottmann, 2018).

The contradictions inherent in these two curricular movements—the adoption of Western-style liberal education juxtaposed with a reaffirmation of Africa's own indigenous knowledge systems—may be experienced as in tension, and thus foster uncertainty, among academic stakeholders, namely faculty, in Africa working to leverage liberal education to its

greatest local effect at their institutions. Further impeding any integrated understanding of these tensions is the predominantly descriptive nature of the works that comprise the available literature on the global spread of liberal education (Godwin, 2013). While descriptive scholarship can tell researchers that liberal education programs are appearing in varied and disparate contexts around the world, little is known empirically about how liberal education curricula are adapted to new contexts or how the tensions between local (e.g., Nigerian or African) and global (e.g., Western) forces are reconciled (or not).

Therefore, exploring how Nigerian faculty members, as the frontline academic staff engaged in curricular planning, revision, and delivery, experience and act upon (or against) the tensions between various global and local forces represents an underdeveloped but promising avenue for understanding liberal education curricula in context. Consequently, my study focuses on how faculty who teach GS courses at UNN understand and navigate the forces at play in the curriculum over time. Given this focus, in this study I ask the following three research questions:

1. What are the forces that influenced the initial development of and ongoing adjustments to the GS curriculum at UNN?
2. How do faculty at UNN's School of General Studies (SGS) make sense of the forces that influenced the initial development of and ongoing adjustments to the GS curriculum?
3. How do GS faculty exercise agency in their curricular work as they negotiate making sense of these forces?

These questions position my research to speak to the unresolved nuances of how liberal education is experienced and put into action in new, especially formerly colonized and non-Western, contexts subject to competing influences and priorities. By exploring these processes through the case of GS at UNN specifically, I aim to enhance understanding of the adaptability

and negotiability of liberal education curricula in the 21st century while simultaneously providing a critical update to the American literature that continues to marginalize liberal education initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa. The ongoing devaluation of African curricula advances liberal education as a paragon of neocolonialism. In contrast, my research significantly reimagines the study of liberal education as an opportunity to resist rather than reify Western cultural imperialism. In the following sections, I review concepts that inform this work and lay out the theoretical framework that guides my study.

## Background Concepts

### Liberal Education and General Education

The HE literature has noted that an uncontested definition for "liberal education," fully distinguished from the associated concepts of "general education" and the "liberal arts," remains elusive (Godwin, 2015b). Numerous sources (Godwin, 2013, 2015a; Peterson, 2012) reference the American Association of Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) terminology when establishing vocabulary. The AAC&U provides succinct definitions of liberal education, liberal arts, liberal arts college, artes liberales, and general education (see APPENDIX A).

These definitions serve as a useful starting point, but do not eliminate all ambiguity. For example, the distinction between general education—such as the GS program at UNN—and liberal education is ill-defined and varies from program to program (Rothblatt, 2003; Godwin, 2015b). According to Godwin, "it is possible for a program to offer general education without being liberal. It is also possible for a program to be labelled 'general education,' when the curriculum actually includes all [the] elements of liberal education" (2015b, p. 2). Similarly, in the USA liberal education is most often associated with small, private liberal arts colleges even though it is also commonly offered at larger public universities (Godwin, 2013; Redden, 2020).

Therefore, recent research has argued that educators should adopt an expanded framework in studies of liberal education that acknowledges that "students receive it across diverse sectors of postsecondary education—from traditional liberal arts colleges to large state research universities" (Rossman, et al., 2020, p. 6). In the Nigerian context, such an expanded perspective would arguably be more attuned to liberal education's varying forms, including general education curricula at public institutions like UNN. Godwin's (2013) dissertation, which I describe more fully in subsequent sections of this dissertation, offers criteria for determining if a HE curriculum constitutes a liberal education. While no Nigerian GS program, neither at UNN nor any other public university, was included in Godwin's inventory of African liberal education programs, it is my contention that GS meets all the criteria for recognizing liberal education.

Finally, regarding the artes liberales—the historical antecedent of liberal education—USA-based liberal education programs "most often cite Greek and Western traditions as their founding model" (Godwin & Altbach, 2016, p. 11). This study however is not confined to the traditional Western narrative. Instead, I also address traditional indigenous examples of broad, multidisciplinary, and holistic models of education, both in Africa broadly (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019, Lilford 2012, 2017) and in Nigeria specifically (Nwosu, 2017a). Such models and traditions represent local precursors to GS that have influenced the curriculum, and interacted with its Western influences, since its earliest development.

**Comparative Higher Education**

Education, as an applied field of study, has often been bounded by national borders and by the policies of federal and regional governing bodies. For researchers in higher education, this reality has traditionally reinforced a starting "assumption that the natural category or unit of analysis for society is defined by national boundaries" (Shahjahan & Kezar, 2012, p. 20).

However, investigating global education phenomena, such as the diffusion of liberal education curricula to new and more diverse contexts, necessitates that researchers move beyond the "national container," to use Shahjahan and Kezar's phrase. Such studies, including this dissertation, require a comparative approach to HE scholarship.

Comparative research in HE can be defined as "research addressing phenomena of higher education in more than one 'culture', 'society' or 'nation' systematically or in a single one in comparative perspective" (Teichler, 1996, p. 448). Various scholars highlight the unique strengths, as well as challenges, of comparative international HE research, noting that it can both increase researchers' ability to generalize across geographies and cultures while also bringing the nuances of individual systems into sharper focus (Kosmutzky & Nokkala, 2014; Teichler, 1996). While my focus on Nigeria might presuppose a national container (Shahjahan & Kezar, 2012), by embedding my treatment of the GS curriculum in the broader discussion of liberal education's international expansion I am addressing it from a comparative perspective (Teichler, 1996). Doing so promises not only to enrich the wider discourse surrounding global liberal education, but to also shed greater light on the distinctiveness of the Nigerian approach to the provision of liberal education.

**Globalization and Internationalization**

Few concepts have received as much attention in the literature on international and comparative higher education in the past few decades as the forces of globalization and the responding internationalization of higher education institutions (HEIs). In fact, the worldwide proliferation of liberal education programs has itself been judged to be a part of the larger process of internationalization, driven by globalization, in HE (Godwin, 2015a). Globalization can be defined as "the economic, political, and societal forces pushing… higher education

toward greater international involvement" (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 290). The forces behind globalization include new technologies and modes of communication, international economic integration, the emergence of English as a global lingua franca, and various other trends generally outside of the control of HEIs (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley. 2009)

Internationalization on the other hand can be thought of as the varied policies and programs—such as, for instance, implementing a general education curriculum—that institutions adopt in response to globalization (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley. 2009). Thus, while "globalization may [seem] unalterable… internationalization involves many choices" (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 291). Internationalizing strategies employed by HEIs include establishing overseas branch campuses and otherwise engaging in transnational education (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012), vying for international status in global rankings (Deem, Mok & Lucas, 2008; Pusser & Marginson, 2013; Shahjahan, Ramirez, & Andreotti, 2017), sending students to study abroad (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley. 2009), and importing or adapting curricula, faculty expertise, and administrative models from abroad (Salmi, 2015). That said, recent theory around globalization in HE (as described in the subsequent section on my "Theoretical Framework") challenges this globalization-internationalization binary. Drawing on the "glonacal" (global, national, and local) spatial dimensions articulated by Marginson and Rhoades (2002), Marginson (2011) defines globalization as "the process of forming the global dimension" in HE and contends that it is mutually affected by the strategies and decisions of HEIs and actors (that is, *internationalization*) at the national and local levels rather than wholly separate from them (p. 3)

Furthermore, when conducting comparative HE research it is imperative to bear in mind that neither the benefits nor the challenges brought about by globalization are evenly distributed across societies. Thus, not all nations are equally well positioned to successfully engage in

internationalization initiatives. This state of affairs typically advantages developed Western countries at the expense of developing, non-White, and formerly colonized countries, with the latter group potentially experiencing globalization as an asymmetric and racialized (Shahjahan and Edwards, 2020) "process of re-colonization" (Deem, Mok & Lucas, 2008, p. 93) and coercion (De Wit, 2019; Teferra, 2019). This global inequity is especially salient in studies, like this one, that focus on interactions between institutions in developing nations, such as Nigeria, and those in colonial and neocolonial centers of power, such as the United Kingdom and the United States respectively.

**Colonization and Neocolonization**

Nigeria experienced a long history of colonial subjugation under British rule, from the early 19th century until the middle of the twentieth century (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). For this reason, the founders of UNN, Nigeria's first post-independence university, intended the University and its mission to be a purposeful departure from the prevailing British model of university education. Even so, the curriculum at UNN, including the GS courses, was originally formulated in consultation with both British and American educators (Nwosu, 2017a; Petitt, 1969). This complicated history with the former colonizing nation and the era's ascendant neo-colonial power makes it essential that any discussion of GS be buttressed by a firm understanding of colonization, along with its variations and related concepts, as it is understood in HE research.

In its strictest sense, *colonization* entails "the establishment by more developed countries of formal political authority over areas of Asia, Africa, Australia, and Latin America" (Scott, 2014, p. 97). Beyond its obvious political and economic ramifications, colonialism is also deeply ideological and cultural, based on internalized assumptions of supremacy on the part of the

colonizer (Heleta, 2016; Poitras Pratt, Louie, Hanson, & Ottmann, 2018). In much the same way, *decolonization* can be understood both as the formal shedding of a colonial political relationship between nations, and as the project of challenging colonial ideologies and revaluing indigenous ways of being and knowing in the colonized nation (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018). In developing countries like Nigeria, higher education is just one of the many institutions that have engaged in decolonization efforts to varying extents and with variable success, as I will return to in subsequent sections of this chapter.

The deleterious impacts and legacies of colonialism by no means ceased with the formal decolonization of most nations in the twentieth century. *Neocolonialism* refers to "tendencies to restore and reproduce colonial relationships and exploitation after independence, albeit in new guises" and often in relation to new actors like the United States (Enslin, 2017, p. 4). In the era of globalization, neocolonialism is often manifested in developing societies by treating "'internationalization' as 'westernization'… or 'Americanization'" (Deem et al., 2018, p. 93). Such a state of affairs is especially likely when traditionally American curricular concepts, such as liberal or general education, are adopted and adapted by developing countries. For this reason, it essential for scholarship on internationalization and globalization in HE to shift its gaze from the Western world to consider the neocolonial ramifications in non-Western developing nations (de Wit, 2019).

**Decolonization, Indigenization, and Nigerianization**

The widespread concern with ameliorating the legacies of colonialism and ongoing neocolonialism in comparative and international HE research speaks to the salience of the concepts of *decolonization* and *indigenization* (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). Indeed, in the past several years "Africa has been the scene of an animated dialogue on decolonisation – largely in

harsh reaction to internationalisation (and globalisation)" (Teferra, 2019). African educators argue that "Decolonisation is a necessary response to… colonialism, neo-colonialism and the recent (re)ascendency of neoliberalism" (LeGrange, 2016, p. 4). Decolonizing education aims to contest and dismantle the "assumptions of colonial superiority" embedded in educational systems (Heleta, 2016; Poitras Pratt et al., 2018, p. 3-4). Meanwhile, the associated project of indigenization seeks to re-center "the epistemological and ontological systems of a country's Indigenous peoples" in the educational process (Poitras Pratt et al., 2018, p. 3-4) in response to colonialism's "denigration and decimation of indigenous knowledges" (LeGrange, 2016, p. 4), or what Heleta (2016), building on the work of Spivak (1994), terms "epistemic violence" (p. 4). Studies of Nigerian higher education, as the inheritor of the British Empire's colonial model of collegiate instruction, require a careful consideration of these ideas. That said, Nigerian scholars have their own indigenous term, in use for decades, that at once both echoes the objectives of decolonization and indigenization while affixing more localized meanings deserving of equal attention—*Nigerianization*.

At its most basic, Nigerianization is "the process of making something (more) Nigerian in character" (Oxford English Dictionaries, 2019), that is "tailored to the peculiar need of the country" (Okafor, 2012, p. 369). Originally, the term was used in reference to the Nigerian government's anti-colonial policy of replacing non-Nigerian personnel with native Nigerians in the public sector, including in administrative and faculty positions in Nigerian universities (Agbowuro, 1976). However, various authors have since referred to the Nigerianization of curricular content (Okonkwo, 1986; Pettit, 1969). In the case of GS at UNN, Nigerianizing the curriculum means not only emphasizing local content and sources (Pettit, 1969), but also recognizing Nigeria's deep-rooted traditions of multidisciplinary learning and continuously

adapting the coursework to meet the modern nation's evolving needs (Nwosu, 2017a). In this way, Nigerianization disrupts the curricular remnants of colonialism by refocusing GS on Nigeria's indigenous knowledge systems and unique priorities while also fostering a more local perspective than is offered by the more general concepts of decolonization and indigenization.

**Curriculum and Curricular Change**

Curricula, and what they represent and convey, are central to the missions of higher education institutions (HEIs) and to the academic work of faculty (Stark, Lowther, Sharp, & Arnold, 1997). At any university the curriculum both conveys what the institution does in a practical sense and signals the ideologies underpinning the institution's approach to higher learning (Hill, 2019). Thus, "changes in curriculum signal not only changes in the practice of teaching or content delivery, but changes in an institution's… values" (p. 2). Strikingly, despite the centrality of curricula to the missions and work of HEIs, no single definition of curriculum has emerged with a consensus in the literature (p. 9), though well-received frameworks for understanding curricula and how they change do exist (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). Much of this ambiguity is attributable to the often ill-defined distinctions between the "planned or intended" curriculum, as represented in documents such as syllabi, and what "is actually taught and learned" in the classroom (Hill, 2019, p. 10).

Curricula operate and undergo changes at different levels. There are multi-institutional curricula (i.e., state-level), institution-level curricula, program-level curricula and course-level curricula (Hill, 2019, Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Stark et al., 1997). My study is concerned with the course- and program-level curriculum at UNN's School of General Studies (SGS), though it also addresses international-, state-, and institution-level forces that influence faculty working at these lower levels. In this research, I conceptualize the program-level curriculum as the entire General

Studies Programme (GSP) as manifested in the SGS at UNN, while the course-level curriculum is that of the specific classes delivered by GS faculty in their individual Units, or departments. Scholars have described course-level curriculum planning, delivery, and change as a relatively independent process driven by individual faculty members' backgrounds, styles, and academic beliefs (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Stark et al., 1997). Program-level development and revision is more infrequent, negotiable, and susceptible to external forces than at the course level, with faculty reporting only intermittent engagement with program academic planning (Hill, 2019; Stark et al., 1997). One study of faculty perceptions of program-level curricular change at two American HEIs found that faculty attributed more weight to the forces of program- and institution-level leadership, disciplinary conventions, interpersonal dynamics, and external impetuses than to their own agency and input when reflecting on the program-level planning process (Stark et al., 1997).

The widely cited "Academic Plan Model" (APM) of college curricula (Lattuca & Stark, 2009) provides a useful framework for thinking about the myriad of forces that influence curricula at various level, albeit with a focus on the experiences of American institutions and academics. The APM identifies external influences, institution-level internal influences, and unit-level internal influences. External influences are those that exert pressure on the planning and revision processes from beyond the bounds of an institution, stemming from the international, national, and regional spheres, and include governmental and market forces, accreditation, and disciplinary bodies among others. Institution-level influences include mandates and constraints deriving from the governance structure, resource-base, and mission(s) of a HEI. Finally, unit-level influences are driven predominantly by the academic and personnel make-up of a program, including discipline(s) and faculty and student characteristics.

Acknowledging that these influences vary from institution-to-institution and from program-to-program, the APM emphasizes taking into account the "sociocultural context" within which external and internal influences are embedded (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 145). Unfortunately, despite this much needed "positioning of curriculum in its sociocultural context, few scholars of curriculum address such context" either in the United States or in Africa (Hill, 2019, p. 12).

*Curricular change in Africa*. Like their Western counterparts, African scholars note that there are numerous conceptualizations of "curriculum" on the continent and provide no standardized definition (LeGrange, 2016; Mngomezulu & Hadebe, 2018). That said, in sub-Saharan Africa the literature on postsecondary curricula often marks the legacies of European colonialism as both its point of departure and central emphasis (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Heleta, 2016; LeGrange, 2016; Mngomezulu & Hadebe, 2018). The colonial enterprise "in Africa brought with it a repudiation of Africa's originality, and a belittling of the continent's authentic experiences" (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019, p. 1) while positing the "Western experience as *the knowledge*" to be taught (p. 3, emphasis added). For the most part, until recently "post-colonial African leadership did not attach much importance to curriculum transformation at the end of colonialism" (p. 38). Meanwhile, the accelerating pace of globalization has frequently had a marginalizing effect on African universities relative to their more globally dominant Western counterparts (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). African HEIs' ongoing reliance on foreign models of education, assistance, and funding have diminished their capacity to drive their own curricula and have arguably contributed to locking the continent into an uneven neocolonial relationship with developed nations in the 21st century (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019).

Given the persistent and "obvious disconnect between education curriculum in Africa and the continent's indigenous knowledge systems," African educators are increasingly calling for a re-centering of indigenous African epistemologies and content at their universities (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019, p. 1). In today's epoch of globalization, and in agreement with Lattuca and Stark's (2009) attention to sociocultural context, international and comparative educators contend that for "African universities dealing with the issues of decolonisation and Africanisation [and Nigerianization], internationalization strategies should be strongly guided by African countries' own context" (de Wit, 2019). However, despite this decolonizing discourse's resonance with the Academic Plan Model, it has yet to significantly address the various global, national and local forces at play in Africa that inform the continent's sociocultural context and position on the international HE landscape (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). Attention to such forces is essential because, as LeGrange (2016) reminds scholars, Africa's "indigenous knowledge does not reside in 'pristine fashion' outside of the influences of other knowledges. [Instead] bodies of knowledge continually influence each other, demonstrating the dynamism of all knowledge systems" (p. 5). Thus, studies of "decolonised curriculum [should] not neglect other knowledge systems and global context" present in African higher education (Heleta, 2016, p. 5). Furthermore, while scholarship in the United States has addressed faculty sensemaking and agency in their engagement with curricula and curricular change (Hill, 2019; Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Stark et al., 1997), none of the aforementioned sources dealing with Africa do so. Clarifying how faculty at a Nigerian university engage with the forces underlying curricular development, revision, and delivery therefore represents a significant contribution of my study.

## Theoretical Framework

As described in the earlier discussion of my research problem, my research questions draw on the concepts of sensemaking and agency to explore faculty perceptions of and engagement with the forces that have influenced the GS curriculum at UNN over time. In this section, I first outline theory on the spatial dimensions—global, national, and local—from which the forces that influence faculty originate and flow. I then describe how this theory has guided my employment of the concepts of sensemaking, agency, and forces in this study.

### Glocalization, Glonacality, and Spatial Dimensions of Globalization

The conventional understanding of globalization, as well as the attendant global diffusion of curricular models such as liberal education, is principally informed by a contention from social scientists that we have entered a new "global age" characterized by the "widespread fear that that local cultures are being overwhelmed by global, allegedly homogenizing processes" (Robertson, 2003). Since the 1990s however, scholars from the fields of anthropology and sociology have started to question this hegemonic, top-down view of how the processes of globalization manifest in different contexts (Appaduari, 1996; Robertson, 2003). This body of theory argues that in the present era cultural influences, practices, and systems of knowledge—which I term *forces* (see "A Note on Forces" section)—arise and circulate from various levels and contexts, and engender multiple simultaneous processes of global homogenization and local heterogenization (Appadurai, 1996; Marginson & Sawir, 2005). From this perspective,

> The central problem of today's global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization… often, the homogenization argument subspeciates into... an argument about Americanization... What these arguments fail to consider is that at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into

> new societies they tend to become indigenized in one or another way. (Appaduarai, 1996, p. 32)

The process by which globalization can, counterintuitively, instigate cultural differentiation and indigenization is dubbed *glocalization* by social scientists working in this domain. Glocalization, as opposed to top-down globalization, describes a world in which, at the spatial dimensions (or spatial levels) of the global and the local, there is both simultaneous synthesis and disjuncture constantly at play in cultural exchange (Robertson, 2003).

In the last two decades, HE researchers have also attended to the various special dimensions at which forces, driven by globalization, "originate, articulate and pass" (Marginson & Sawir, 2005). Scholars have increasingly acknowledged that "there is no uniform [globalizing] influence on… [higher education] institutions," but instead "all globalization is in fact subject to local (or national and regional) influences" (Douglas, 2005, p. 445). A prominent example of this theoretical turn is in the *glonacal* perspective—meaning *glo*bal, *na*tional, and lo*cal*—presented as part of Marginson and Rhoades (2002) "glonacal agency heuristic" model (see Figure 1 in APPENDIX B) and cited by numerous comparative and international HE scholars (Cantwell & Maldonado□Maldonado, 2009; Marginson, 2011; Marginson & Sawir, 2005; Shahjahan & Kezar, 2012). The concept of "glonacality" moves HE research beyond the "national container" (Shahjahan & Kezar, 2012) by focusing on "the intersections, interactions, [and] mutual determinations" that shape human actions and institutional agency across the global, national, and local spatial dimensions (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002, p. 288-289). The glonacal perspective is especially appropriate for examining GS at UNN as it "encourages a focus on specific organizations" (p. 290) and "the historically embedded structures on which current activity and influence are based" (p. 292). Through a glonacal lens, local actors and institutions,

like faculty at UNN's SGS, are seen to be in ongoing interaction with both global dynamics (e.g., (neo)colonialism and international collaborations) and national organizations (e.g., Nigeria's National University Commission (NUC)). Each of these three levels influences the others and is in turn influenced by them in a reciprocal fashion (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). A glonacal perspective re-conceptualizes globalization, and its attendant global trends such as the spread of liberal education, as a "dynamic process in which universities take part, not a state of being to which universities respond" (Cantwell & Maldonado□Maldonado, 2009, p. 292).

Studying the international spread of liberal education specifically, Godwin (2013) similarly identifies "rationales" that HEIs engage with when establishing liberal education programs. These rationales include "global macro rationales, national macro rationales, and [local] micro rationales" (p. 114). While Godwin's framework generalizes across many nations to speak to how whole institutions rationalize the initial founding of liberal education curricula, and thus does not align to my context-bound case study of how individual faculty make sense of a curriculum and its transformations overtime, this work demonstrates an acknowledgment of the spatial dimensions at play in the global spread liberal education. Importantly, Godwin calls for future researchers to conduct national and institutional case studies, like my own, to flesh out the local forces (or "micro" in Godwin's terminology) "specific to institutions, programs, courses or individuals" (2013, p. 115). Thus, by applying a glonacal lens to the study GS at UNN my research makes a meaningful and novel contribution to the global liberal education literature.

**Sensemaking and Agency**

As noted previously, research is lacking on how the forces shaping curricula and curricular change are experienced by faculty in Africa as they revise and deliver their courses of study. Therefore, this study concerns itself with how SGS faculty make sense of the competing

and disjunctive forces underlying the GS curriculum at UNN in order to take action in the course of their curricular work. Two concepts central to this inquiry are *sensemaking* and *agency*. Sensemaking, a concept first formulated by organizational theorist Karl Weick (1995), is a process of individual and collective reflection and meaning construction that actors engage in to better understand the significance and "root causes" of an event, outcome, or influence that "interrupts [their] day-to-day life" or their work (Hill, 2019, p. 15). Scholars contend that sensemaking is both "personal and interpretive in nature" with each individual's interpretation of meaning being interwoven with their sense of self as a professional and their "social context" within a larger system or institution (p. 15). At UNN, this social context (or "sociocultural" context to borrow from Lattuca and Stark (2009)) is entwined with the legacies of colonialism, today's uneven global HE landscape, and Africa and Nigeria's marginal positions in the international liberal education discourse. So, my research follows Gonzales' (2013) prescription to also be concerned with "*critically* exploring how sensemaking processes are wrapped in and often reproduce historical conditions and/or relations of power and privilege" (p. 184, emphasis in original).

Related to faculty sensemaking is the notion of individual and collective agency. Agency is a central component of Marginson and Rhoades (2002) "glonacal *agency* heuristic," that I adapt in this research, so their definitions in large part guided my application of this concept. First, agency refers to the "ability of people individually and collectively to take action (exercise agency), at the global, national, and local levels" (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002, p. 289). For example, individual and groups of faculty in "a department or institution [*have* agency to] influence local practice and undertake initiatives for their units to compete in international higher education" (p. 289, emphasis added). Sensemaking is itself "action-oriented and results in a

decision made," and so informs how faculty exercise their agency in the course of their work (Hill, 2019, p. 15). At the same time, when faculty exercise agency in their curricular work their actions (or inactions) are likely to influence subsequent instances of sensemaking. Furthermore, actions taken by faculty as curricular agents constitute "local forces," thus feeding back into the local spatial level of glonacality. Second, agency can also refer to an "entity or organization" operating and exerting influence at the global, national or local levels (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002, p. 289). Such agencies include local institutions like UNN, governmental bodies like the NUC, and international and regional organization such as the United Nations and African Union (p. 289). "Each of these *is* an agency" (p. 289, emphasis in original). While my third research question, and therefore my theoretical framework, is mainly concerned with the first definition of agency—agency exercised individually and collectively by faculty as they engage with the GS curriculum—it is also essential that this work take into account the influences of these organizational agencies. Such organizational agencies may act as conduits or points of articulation for the forces shaping the GS curriculum and influencing faculty as they engage in sensemaking and exercise agency as academic agents.

**A Note on Forces**

Before proceeding, it is necessary to clarify my conceptualization of 'forces' within this framework, and how they act upon liberal education curricula and faculty at the global, national, and local levels. While I use the term 'forces' to refer to the influences that guide individual and collective perceptions and actions throughout this study, other scholars cited in this dissertation have variously conceptualized them as 'agencies' (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002), 'institutional logics' (Hill, 2019), 'rationales' (Godwin, 2013), 'global (cultural) flows,' and 'scapes' (Appadurai, 1996; Marginson & Sawir, 2005). I however take a broader tack. In this study,

forces, as I deploy the term, include the second definition of "agencies" provided by Marginson and Rhoades (2002) in their original glonacal framework. Again, such agencies are entities or organizations—that is individuals or institutionalized collectives—that operate and exert influence at the global, national, or local levels (p. 289). Such agencies, for example the United Nations (UN) at the global level, exert considerable power over their domains of influence and have the capacity to regulate the sensemaking and agency of individuals and groups operating at the local level.

There are, however, other forces that circulate beyond the bounds of specific entities and organizations and in many ways take on a life of their own. The forces of this latter and more nebulous variety, which I refer to as "influences" in my findings chapter, manifest in much the same way as the concepts of "ideoscapes" (Appadurai, 1996) and "logics" (Friedland & Alford, 1991) as described by social scientists. Appadurai's notion of ideoscapes, which he defined as circulating as "ideologies" (p. 36), was taken up and expanded by higher education scholars Marginson and Sawir (2005) to represent the varied "ideas [and] practices" which flow across the imbricated dimensions of the global higher education landscape (p. 290). Logics, or institutional logics, are similarly supra-organizational, "socially constructed, historical patterns of… practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce" their material and social realities (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 5). A good example of this latter kind of force, or influence, is globalization itself. From a glonacal point of view globalization is merely another idea or ideology—albeit a powerful and ubiquitous one that carries with it innumerable attendant practices, assumptions, interactions, and responses—representing an "unstoppable deterritorialised force… modernisation writ large" (Marginson & Sawir, 2005, p. 302). Bearing these theoretical distinctions in mind, I explore both types of

forces—(1) the actions and discourses of self-contained 'agencies,' and (2) the freely flowing 'influences' of untethered trends, dynamics, and ideas—at each of the glonacal levels. A visual representation of my theoretical framework can be found in Figure 2 (see APPENDIX B).

**Application of the Theoretical Framework**

Connecting the concepts of sensemaking and agency to understand how faculty experience and engage with forces from various spatial dimensions in their academic work with the GS curriculum at UNN is at the heart of my inquiry. Previous studies that have employed the concept of "glonacality" (Cantwell & Maldonado□Maldonado, 2009; Marginson & Sawir, 2005) or developed similar frameworks (Godwin, 2013) have primarily examined institution-level activity and decision-making from administrative and policy perspectives. By instead centering faculty experiences, this study aims to understand the meaning construction processes that characterize the delivery and revision of a liberal education curriculum at one Nigerian university in practice. Overall, I utilize my theoretical framework to explicate how forces, flowing from and through spatial dimensions that are at once disjunctive and imbricated, influence and regulate faculty sensemaking and agency in curricular work.

## Conclusion

Scholars have described the global spread of liberal education outside of the USA with increasing frequency in the last two decades. Yet, a full accounting of how this historically Western model of HE is understood, recontextualized, and put into practice in non-Western contexts, where more specialized forms of postsecondary instruction have long dominated, remains elusive. Current international and comparative scholarship is especially and conspicuously taciturn on cases of liberal education in sub-Saharan Africa where the forces of colonization, globalization, nationalization, and indigenization collide and intermingle in novel

and complex ways. Employing the lens of glonacality to investigate how UNN's faculty make sense and exercise agency in their work with the GS curriculum promises to shed new light on how forces at various spatial levels act upon liberal education, as well as those charged with its (re)design and delivery, in one corner of Africa.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature(s) on both liberal education's recent international diffusion and on GS at UNN since the early 1960s. In the literature review, I confront the bifurcated nature of these overlapping but independent areas of inquiry, and bring them into dialog with each other to chart a clearer way forward for exploring the place and significance of GS at UNN in the wider landscape of liberal education. In Chapter 3, I lay out the sources of data—(1) primary documents from UNN, the SGS, and MSU, (2) qualitative interviews with current senior faculty members working in each of the SGS's disciplinary Units, and (3) secondary sources written by and/or about faculty working with the GS curriculum (Ezeocha, 1977; Nwosu, 2017a; Nwosu, 2017b; Oluikpe, 1984; Oluikpe, 1987; Pettit, 1969)—that, in concert with my theoretical framework, inform my findings. In Chapter 4, I use these sources to describe the evolution of the GS program, from its establishment in 1961 to the present day. In Chapter 5, I illustrate the forces that have influenced the character, mission, and content of the GSP overtime and analyze how contemporary faculty report making sense and exercising agency in their work with the curriculum as they navigate these competing forces.

# CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

## State and Scope of the Literature

The body of literature that informs this study might more easily be understood as two bodies, one American and one Nigerian. Though seemingly unaware of each other, these discrete discourses overlap in their concern with liberal education outside of the United States. The bifurcated nature of the literature on this topic hampers any integrated understanding of GS in Nigeria in relation to the emergence of liberal education curricula across the globe. Reconciling these two bodies of literature is thus of interest both to American scholars concerned with documenting occurrences of liberal education in different international contexts, and to Nigerian officials and educators focused on leveraging liberal education to its greatest local effect.

First, the American scholarship to date is predicated on the supposition that liberal education is a peripheral educational model outside of the USA that has only recently been adopted in many countries (Boyle, 2019a; Godwin, 2013; Marber & Araya, 2017). Consequently, the American literature on liberal education's global spread is itself a recent development, appearing in the early twenty-first century (Gillespie, 2001). This body of literature remains emergent, though it continues to grow and includes books, dissertations, case studies, and articles for academic and popular consumption. Sources documenting the global liberal education phenomenon are predominantly theoretical (Boyle, 2019a; Godwin, 2015a) and descriptive in nature, relying principally on "expert analysis and perspective" rather than empirical investigations (Godwin, 2013, p. 24). The few empirical studies cited in this review, such as Godwin's (2013) dissertation, represent the exception rather than the rule and chiefly examine non-faculty stakeholders (students, institutional leaders, etc.) in the more well-studied regions of Europe and Asia (Lewis & Rupp, 2015; Sklad, Friedman, Park, & Oomen, 2016).

Importantly, within this literature Africa is considered to be an "underrepresented region" with African liberal education initiatives representing a tiny fraction of those currently recognized by American authors (Godwin 2013; Godwin & Altbach, 2016). Few sources explore liberal education in Africa specifically (Cross & Adam, 2012; Gouillart, 2009; Grant, 2016; Lilford, 2012, 2017).

Second and conversely, a Nigerian literature on the GS curriculum has existed for decades and, with a few exceptions (Pettit, 1969), was and continues to be written by Nigerian scholars themselves. Rather than reflecting on the transplantation of American-style liberal education, as concerns more recent American writers, this discourse deals with the Nigerian experience with a hybrid model of liberal general education that draws from Nigerian, American, and British traditions (Nwosu, 2017a; Petitt, 1969). Early scholarship referencing GS in Nigeria often came from Nigerian scholars either writing doctoral dissertations at American universities (Ezeocha, 1977; Osunde, 1984) or publishing in American journals (Osunde, 1985), though sources of entirely Nigerian provenance were not unheard of (Oluikpe, 1984, 1987; Okonkwo, 1986). In the twenty-first century, Nigerian educators have produced books (Okafor, 2012; Nwosu, 2017a) and hosted conferences (Nwosu, 2017b; Ugwu, Ngwu, & Ajah, 2019) concerning GS and articles have appeared in African journals (Nweke and Nwoye, 2016; Ogbeide, 2018). Nigeria's indigenous literature on GS is in large part comprised of descriptive works and evaluative appraisals of the curriculum that emphasize the same sort of "expert analysis and perspective" characteristic of the American literature (Godwin, 2013, p. 24) at times supplemented with student feedback and course-level data (Oluikpe, 1984; Nwosu, 2017b). It is important to note that those sources that include student and programmatic empirical data come predominantly from non-peer reviewed papers presented at conferences hosted by the SGS in the

1980s and 2010s. Such secondary sources written by GS faculty represent an essential source of data in my study and are addressed in Chapter 3 of this manuscript. Like its American counterpart, the Nigerian literature offers little empirical insight on faculty engagement with the curriculum and the forces that influence it.

## International Liberal Education: The American Perspective

### Liberal Education Worldwide

The rising prevalence of liberal education—often conflated, appropriately or otherwise, with liberal arts education—that American scholars have noted in recent decades has variously been characterized as a phenomenon (Godwin, 2015b), a trend (Godwin, 2015a), a resurgence (Godwin & Altbach, 2016) and a movement (Gillespie, 2001) in the literature. By whatever name, the emergence of such curricula outside of the United States, though still on the periphery of most higher education systems, is geographically dispersed across nations and continents where more specialized models have long dominated. However, this development manifests more like an internationalization strategy pursued simultaneously, but inadvertently, by various international HEIs as a response to American higher education's cachet than as a premeditated movement coordinated across institutions and regions (Godwin, 2013).

*Godwin's global inventory.* No researcher has made a greater contribution to this incipient area of inquiry than Kara Godwin. Beginning with a 2013 dissertation, Godwin has written a minor body of literature on the topic of international liberal education. Godwin's dissertation aimed to provide a baseline for understanding the little studied diffusion of liberal education across the global higher education landscape. Godwin did so by surveying the online presence of non-USA liberal education programs, culminating in the "Global Liberal Education Inventory" (GLEI) of 183 such programs on every continent except Antarctica (see Figure 3 in

APPENDIX C). In order to merit a spot in the GLEI, undergraduate HE programs had to meet certain criteria. A program could either (1) "self-identify" as "liberal education" or "liberal arts" (p. 49), or (2) offer a "multi- or interdisciplinary" curriculum that includes a shared general education component and promotes competencies reflecting the philosophy of liberal education, such as "transferable skills" or "social responsibility" (p. 52).

Seminal as Godwin's (2013) dissertation was however, there were methodological delimitations inherent to the survey techniques employed that predisposed this study to overlook some liberal education initiatives like GS in Nigeria. By collecting data solely from program websites and documents available online, Godwin's methodology disadvantaged regions with limited technological infrastructure and low internet penetration, like sub-Saharan Africa. In such "underrepresented regions" (p. 196) programs that did not explicitly self-identify as 'liberal education'—perhaps instead referring to themselves as 'General Studies' for instance—were apt to be overlooked if it was not readily verifiable online that they met Godwin's second set of criteria, even when they actually did so. Thus, Godwin's (2013) world-wide inventory of online sources arguably overrepresented the proportion of liberal education programs in more developed regions, such as Europe and East Asia, whereas more geographically concentrated analyses inclusive of analog sources have the potential to bring greater sensitivity to the study of liberal education in less developed regions.

*Additional American scholarship*. Various other American and Western scholars have contributed to the incipient study of global liberal education in the past 20 years. While Godwin (2015b; 2017b; 2018b) has re-visited her 2013 findings, other scholars offer unique lenses or areas of emphasis concerning this phenomenon. Scholarship from the first decade of the 21st century variously considered liberal education's global spread as an example of collaborative

transnational education (Gillespie, 2001), a global diffusion of an "American obsession" (Rothblatt, 2003, p. 1), and a potential vehicle for engendering greater peace, equity, and engagement in a global community (Nussbaum, 2004). In the past decade, this area of scholarship has accelerated with the publication of numerous articles, books, chapters, case studies, book reviews, and news stories (Boyle, 2019a, 2019b; Marber & Araya, 2017; Peterson, 2012; Redden, 2009).

One important research trajectory that has started to emerge is a budding critical emphasis on liberal education programs in developing nations (Peterson, 2012). Such scholarship, though still on the sidelines of the global liberal education discourse, has voiced concerns about the potentially racialized and asymmetric consequences of uncritically exporting liberal education (Shahjahan & Edwards, 2020)—and both Western cultural hegemony and a neoliberal emphasis on "economic imperatives" along with it (Godwin, 2015a, p. 225; 2017c)—as well as highlighted non-Western curricular traditions that share some of the multidisciplinary characteristics of liberal education (Altbach, 2016; Boyle, 2019b; Godwin & Altbach, 2016). This theoretical turn toward a more critical perspective plays an important, and for me welcomed, role in troubling both the overt American-centrism and unalloyed optimism surrounding the spread of liberal education that have typified the literature emanating from the USA. Importantly, these more critical sources acknowledge that liberal education, despite its great promise, has the potential to reify educational and economic disparities between the developed and developing world if it is not adapted in ways that honor local cultures and histories (Peterson, 2012). That said, this growing acknowledgement of the problem has not as yet manifested itself in the widespread study of liberal education's impact or adaptation in developing and post-colonial contexts, particularly in Africa. As was the case in Godwin's

(2013) dissertation, the world regions whose liberal education initiatives seem to receive the most scholarly attention are those in Europe (Rothblatt, 2003, Sklad, et al., 2016; Wende; 2011) and East Asia (Godwin & Pickus, 2018; Lewis & Rupp, 2015), with Africa left underattended by American and Western researchers.

**Liberal Education in Africa**

The study of liberal education in sub-Saharan Africa as a region remains underdeveloped among American scholars even considering the modest size of the literature on international liberal education overall. Among those USA-based researchers concerned with liberal education's global diffusion, a narrowly conceived consensus has arisen that Africa, as an "underrepresented region" (Godwin, 2013, p. 196), is home to very few extant HEIs that offer a liberal education to students and all of these were founded in just the past few decades. As a result, few authors have written specifically about African liberal education (Cross & Adam, 2012; Gouillart, 2009; Grant, 2016; Lilford, 2012, 2017). Some additional sources address the African contexts in a tangential way, but these too are small in number (Gillespie, 2001; Godwin, 2013, 2015b; Godwin & Altbach, 2016).

*Historically.* For those engaged in American liberal education, the familiar narrative is that the seven artes liberales first appeared in ancient Greece, were retained and expanded upon in medieval European universities, and were taken up in colonial America eventually culminating in liberal education in the USA. (Godwin & Altbach, 2016; Peterson, 2012). In the context of Africa however, equal weight must be given to non-Western educational traditions that, though long overshadowed by colonial educational models, still exert influence over curricular philosophies on the continent (Altbach, 2016; Godwin & Altbach, 2016). African societies had deeply rooted and integrated precolonial knowledge systems and "contrary to

widespread beliefs, formal, and informal education were actively in existence in Africa prior to the commencement of colonialism" (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019, p. 23). Such "traditional knowledge systems [commonly blurred] the disciplinary boundaries that have been a feature of European education since Aristotle" and exhibited a multidisiplinarity in some ways reminiscent to today's liberal education (Lilford, 2012, p. 190, 2017). For example, "traditional medicine incorporated botany, physiology, theology, psychology, music, dance, and poetry. Cultural knowledge and literature were inseparable, as oral praises, applying a poetic formula, served as the repository for history and genealogy" (p. 191). Overall, researchers have shown that African societies' indigenous epistemologies, though varied, shared an "integrative and holistic… nature, rooted in a culture of kinship between the natural and supernatural" compared to Western education's disciplinarity, specialization, and reductionism (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019, p. 8).

Thus, the acute specialization commonly observed across most African higher education systems today is a legacy of educational models enforced under European colonial rule on the continent and does not represent an indigenous development or tradition (Lilford, 2012, 2017). The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, as one of the first post-independence universities in Africa, innovatively departed from the British colonial paradigm of specialization and was instead modeled on the American land grant university, combining the "liberal and useful arts" (Lilford, 2017, p. 159). Despite acknowledging the uniqueness of the UNN curriculum in its early years, and indeed addressing General Studies by name, the few histories of liberal education in sub-Saharan Africa available for this review (Lilford, 2012, 2107) erroneously report that "the Nsukka model has not received the wide… propagation it deserves in Nigeria and hence in the rest of the continent" (2012, p. 206). This contention is inconsistent with the domestic Nigerian literature on GS that I cover in subsequent sections of this chapter.

*At present.* Today, the most comprehensive account of liberal education in Africa comes from Godwin (2013, 2017b, 2018b) who identified a mere four African programs for inclusion in the Global Liberal Education Inventory, accounting for only two percent of all liberal education programs worldwide. It is important to note that Godwin (2013) chose to discuss North African liberal education, namely a single university in Egypt, alongside institutions and programs in the "Middle East and Arab World" (p. 171). I have elected to follow Godwin's convention of focusing on sub-Saharan contexts in this review of African liberal education because scholars have written about North African curricula as part of the Middle East (collectively called the "Middle East and North Africa" or MENA) elsewhere (Al-Hendawi, Ahmed, & Albertine, 2019). Godwin's African institutions are American University of Nigeria, Ashesi University in Ghana, Africa Nazarene University in Kenya, and Al Akhawayn University in Morocco. Godwin's lone Nigerian institution, the private American University of Nigeria (AUN), was established in 2004 and brands itself as an "American-style" and "liberal arts" institution (Ukpai, 2018). AUN uses the more familiar (for Americans at least) nomenclature of "General Education" (American University of Nigeria, 2018, p. 62) rather that the Nigerian-specific appellation of "General Studies" first introduced at UNN in the mid-twentieth century (Nwosu, 2017a). This difference in terminology, coupled with AUN's more explicit online branding, may seem insignificant at first glance, but it undoubtedly advantaged AUN and similar institutions in Godwin's (2013) GLEI.

In any case, Godwin has little to say about Nigerian liberal education, noting that "Ashesi University in Ghana is the only program highlighted in the current literature" on liberal education in Africa (2013, p. 32). Ashesi University is a private liberal arts college founded in 2002 that has received some positive attention in the USA (Gouillart, 2009; Grant, 2016;

Redden, 2009). In addition to the programs identified by Godwin, the Global Liberal Arts Alliance, an "international partnership of colleges and universities advancing liberal arts education," lists the International University of Grand-Bassam, founded in 2005 in the Francophone West African nation of Côte d'Ivoire, among its member institutions (GLCA, 2020). Beyond West Africa, Cross and Adam (2012), writing in Peterson's (2012) book on liberal education in developing nations, discuss the state of liberal education in South Africa. According to these authors, neoliberal pressures, tied to national development, globalization, and competitiveness, have led both students and the South African government to prioritize utilitarian higher education. The resulting ascendance of professional and STEM programs in South African universities comes at the expense of liberal arts disciplines, especially the humanities and social sciences (Cross & Adam, 2012). Godwin (2013), reviewing Cross and Adam, lauds their chapter for highlighting "the complexities of a developing society and the relationship between those complexities and higher education curriculum" (p. 206).

### General Studies: The Nigerian Perspective

With the exception of Lilford's (2012, 2017) brief reference to UNN's early formation, any mention of Nigeria's GS curriculum is completely absent from the American literature described in the preceding sections. This omission, even though in all likelihood made unwittingly, represents more than a simple failure to recognize a unique example of liberal education. Inattention to GS begets a straitened picture of liberal education in Africa and problematically reinforces the continent's position on the periphery of higher education globally. Given that GS courses are a central component of the "Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards" that the Nigerian government stipulates for the country's dozens of universities (Ogbeide, 2018, p. 27), American scholars have arguably underestimated the prevalence of

liberal education in Nigeria specifically and Africa generally. In order to get a more accurate accounting of General Studies, I now turn to literature that has long emanated from Nigeria, authored predominantly by Nigerian scholars.

**Colonial Backdrop**

An appraisal of the legacies of British colonialism in what would become the nation of Nigeria, especially concerning higher education, is necessary in order to understand the impetuses and motivations that drove UNN's founding, as well as the creation of the GS program. Early philosophies and institutions of formal education in colonial West Africa were modeled on those that dominated in the colonial metropole of Great Britain, "the emphasis of which has been accurately described as overspecialization" (Osunde, 1985, p. 49). In the post-WWII years, when higher education institutions were being established in the colonies, a specialized, vocationally-oriented philosophy of tertiary education was dominant throughout the British Empire (Lilford, 2012).

The entrenchment of specialization-centric curricula in what was to become Nigeria was evidenced by two reports commissioned by the British government in 1945—the Asquith Report and the Elliot Report (Hussey, 1945). The Asquith Report took as its purview all the colonial territories of the British Empire, while the Elliot Report exclusively examined West Africa. As the more wide-ranging of the two reports, the Asquith Report detailed the British government's general philosophy toward colonial higher education. While the Asquith Report proffered some positive language regarding a broad, liberal education for the Empire's colonial subjects, it largely restricted its recommendations to that same specialized philosophy of higher learning that was in vogue in England at the time (Asquith et al., 1945), tacitly reifying specialized tertiary learning throughout the British colonies.

The Elliot Report, which largely adhered to the same overall ideology toward higher education as the Asquith Report, was of greater practical consequence in colonial Nigeria. One tangible outcome of the Elliot report came about in 1948 with the founding of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria's first university. At the outset, the University of Ibadan functioned as a constituent college of the "Empire University" of the University of London (Hussey, 1945, p. 166), and it remained in "a special relationship scheme" with that institution until 1962, two years after Nigerian independence (University of Ibadan, 2018a). As such, students at Ibadan, like their counterparts throughout the British Empire, were expected to concentrate narrowly on a single subject during their undergraduate years, often even beginning to specialize "in preparatory studies before college" (Osunde, 1985, p. 50). Disillusioned with this model of collegiate learning, and indeed with the entire colonial experience, UNN's founder and first Chancellor, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, was determined that Nigeria's first post-independence University would offer a markedly different type of higher education (Pettit, 1969).

**University of Nigeria and National Universities Commission, 1960-Present**

*Early years: the 1960s.* The availability of a body of literature regarding UNN's early years and the initial development of the GS curriculum in the immediate aftermath of Nigerian independence is owed largely to the unique role played by Michigan State University (MSU) in the establishment of UNN from 1960-1967. Due to Dr. Azikiwe's desire for a purposeful departure from the prevailing British system of colonial education, the new university was collaboratively developed by Nigerian academics and representatives from both MSU and the British Inter-University Council (IUC), with support from the American International Cooperation Administration (ICA) (today known as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (Pettit, 1969). This collaboration resulted in an extensive archive of early

primary sources (interviews with faculty, meeting minutes, course catalogs and prospectuses, and other official and semi-official documents from UNN, MSU, USAID, and the IUC) being stored at MSU (MSU Archives, 2011). At the same time, returning MSU faculty advisors, whose departures from Nsukka were hastened by the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967, were in a position to share their experiences and insights on UNN's formative years (Ezeocha, 1977; Pettit, 1969).

One such faculty advisor was Lincoln Pettit, a natural scientist who relied on the archives housed at MSU to narrate the GS curriculum's genesis and evolution in the 1960s (Pettit, 1969). Six other MSU advisors spoke of their time at UNN with Peter Ezeocha, a Nigerian doctoral student who attended college in the UK and pursued his graduate education the USA before returning to UNN to teach, in the following decade (Ezeocha, 1977). From these American witnesses researchers learn that, while GS was not the only innovation introduced to Nigeria by UNN in this period, "the introduction of the liberal arts [i.e., General Studies] and the American land grant system of higher education" was foundational to the university's impact on Nigerian HE (Ezeocha, 1977, p. 314). Even in its formative years the GS curriculum was intended to function as the liberal education component of students' studies at UNN (Pettit, 1969, p. iii, vii, 4-15, 8-48:49). The curriculum did so through the delivery of four interdisciplinary courses—in the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, and the Use of English— required of all incoming undergraduates in addition to the more specialized studies of their home departments. Dr. Azikiwe drew upon his own experiences as a student in the United States, along with his palpable dissatisfaction with the prevailing British form of tertiary education, when eliciting the help of MSU and USAID to assist with adapting liberal education to the Nigerian context (Pettit, 1969; Poloma & Szelényi, 2019).

Even though the roots of these curricular innovations at UNN have often been attributed to the USA (Ezeocha, 1977; Poloma & Szelényi, 2019), the GS courses were never intended to impose a purely American form of liberal education on Nigerian learners and "*Nigerianization* of the courses naturally followed" (Pettit, 1969, p. v, emphasis added). The process of Nigerianization included emphasizing the works of Nigerian scholars and issues of special national, and Africa, concern while still maintaining a "wide-angle lens… with a view of the rest of the world's problems" as was deemed essential in general education (p. vi). Indeed, several MSU advisors contended that "such things as localizing research and… the teaching of local things… were first experienced at Nsukka" in the post-independence years (Ezeocha, 1977, p. 278). The onset of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967 cut short the cooperation between MSU and UNN and left American scholars with little access to information about the GS program's ongoing development and adjustment in the years that followed. From this period onwards those writing about GS at UNN, and in Nigeria broadly, would be exclusively Nigerian scholars.

*The 1980s.* The two decades following Nigeria's independence witnessed the nation's HE system expand beyond Ibadan and Nsukka, and with it General Studies curricula. GS courses as first developed at UNN, though not yet required of all Nigerian college students, had by the late 1970s received positive attention from the federal government. Federal interest instigated the replication of GS-type curricula, albeit in "varying forms and varying extent," by the majority of Nigerian universities as well as the establishment of the Nigerian Association of General Studies (Oluikpe, 1984, p. 2). In this way, GS as an idea had matured by the mid-1980s to the point of encouraging a reflexive body of indigenous scholarship. This literature issued both from the birthplace of GS at UNN and from the work of Nigerian education researchers working elsewhere to adapt similar curricula to their own contexts.

In the 1980s, UNN hosted GS educators from around the country at a series of semi-annual conferences for the Nigerian Association of General Studies, a professional body with the objective of "promoting the advancement of General Studies in Nigeria" (Oluikpe, 1984, p. v). These conferences addressed innovations in the administration, course content, and pedagogy of GS curricula (Oluikpe, 1984) and considered the role to be played by GS in fostering a spirit of national consciousness and unity in Nigeria (Oluikpe, 1987). Select papers from these meetings, compiled into Oluikpe's edited volumes (1984, 1987), both reflected back, examining Nigeria's history with the narrow specialization of British colonial education and the introduction of GS in 1961, and looked forward, considering how GS might be leveraged in order to contribute to national and pan-African development. During this same period, other UNN GS instructors also wrote of the progress of GS at UNN after its trial years. This scholarship echoed many of the findings from earlier authors (Pettit,1969; Ezeocha, 1977) while noting that the ongoing Nigerianization of the GS curriculum was one of the key achievements of the 1970s (Okonkwo, 1986, p. 298).

As those in Nsukka were testifying to the ascendancy of GS domestically, across the Atlantic Ocean a Nigerian scholar was pursuing a doctorate in education in the United States. Osunde's (1984) dissertation was not focused solely on GS, but rather addressed GS as one among several curricular trends in Nigerian HE. These trends had, as of 1984, generally stimulated Nigerian tertiary curricula that were increasingly "broad-based and rich in the African culture... and [with less of] the narrow specialization characteristic of the inherited English curricula" (1984, p. 137). However, subsequent work specifically examining GS curricula at various Nigerian universities, confirmed Oluikpe's (1984) earlier contention that the prevalence and format of GS requirements remained highly variable across Nigerian HEIs at this time

(Osunde, 1985). Only a minority of schools had by 1985 adopted a full suite of GS courses as were in place at UNN. Other universities began augmenting their still relatively specialized curricula with a "combined degree" (p. 55), similar to the double-major known elsewhere, or compulsory courses at the department, rather than university, level (Osunde, 1985). Yet, by the end of the decade this status quo would be shaken as the federal government of Nigeria involved itself in the curricular enterprise at the nation's universities. In 1989 GS coursework was formally given a new vitality as a core component of the "Minimum Academic Standards" prescribed by the HE arm of the Nigerian government, the National University Commission (NUC) (Ogbeide, 2018, p. 27).

*The 21st century.* Building on General Studies' momentum in the 1980s, the NUC issued the Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) in 1989, now the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS), that serves as a "benchmark of standards which must be complied with by universities" in order to maintain accreditation in Nigeria (Ogbeide, 2018, p. 27). Prominent among these minimum standards are general education requirements that, though still allowing a great deal of latitude at the institutional level, were modelled on the GS courses first offered at UNN (Ogbeide, 2018). The BMAS issued in 2014 state that the "aim of the General Studies Programme is to expose students to a course of *liberal education* [emphasis added]… to produce well-rounded graduates" (National Universities Commission, 2014, p. 15).

In the early twenty-first century, GS remains a topic of recurrent interest among Nigerian academics, both at UNN and across the country. Recent collaborative scholarship by GS faculty and administrators (Nwosu, 2017a) and GS-themed conferences (Nwosu, 2017b; Ugwu, Ngwu, & Ajah, 2019) at UNN's SGS describe numerous facets of GS at UNN including its history, management, student outcomes, course requirements, and implications for the future. Especially

instructive are these works' emphasis on the GS curriculum's philosophical roots in Nigeria's pre-colonial systems of education and learning (Nwosu, 2017a) even as they consider the transnational implications of GS for addressing "global human problems" (Ugwu, Ngwu, & Ajah, 2019, p. i). For example, UNN Humanities lecturers Agbo and Uzuegbu draw parallels between GS and traditional Nigerian approaches to socializing succeeding generations, noting that in the "indigenous Nigerian home… no child was confined to one area of knowledge" (2017, p. 79). These GS practitioners also narrate how GS has continued to be changed and adapted at its institution of origin since the curriculum's inception. Revisions to the curriculum have included adding new GS courses to address issues relevant to Nigeria's needs and circumstances in the new millennium, such as information literacy in the digital age and the study of peace and conflict resolution (Nwosu, 2017a).

Other scholars look beyond UNN to contemplate how the Nigerian HE system's modern manifestation of GS can contribute to national wellbeing. For instance, in his history of university education in Nigeria, Nduka Okafor (2012) offers a discussion of GS including its origins at UNN, subsequent spread to other Nigerian institutions, and the curriculum's potential benefits for the country. Furthermore, given the challenges faced by Nigeria as a rapidly growing pluralistic society with deeply rooted inequities of wealth and opportunity, authors have advanced GS as a remedy for the communal, political, and religious violence that has sporadically plagued Nigeria for decades (Okafor, 2017) and as a forum for instilling the civic values of "responsiveness, mutual understanding and patriotism" (Ogbeide, 2018, p. 26) in the next generation. However, not all Nigerian researchers are so optimistic. Others argue that rampant corruption on the part of institutional and political leaders charged with administering GS curricula have kept such programs from having their optimum impact on students at many

universities (Nweke & Nwoye, 2016). Given such diverse views among academics, it seems certain that GS, with both its promise and its limitations, will remain an area of inquiry in Nigeria for years to come.

## Conclusion

The two bodies of literature just described, despite arising at a great distance from one another, explore phenomena that are more alike than their disparate points of origin would suggest. Just as liberal education is called an "American obsession" (Rothblatt, 2003), GS has emerged as a topic of significant interest in its Nigerian homeland. Furthermore, though GS—fusing Americanesque liberal learning with Nigeria's indigenous and colonial educational heritages—predates the more recent global spread of liberal education programs documented by American scholars by several decades, the similarities in their origins are difficult to deny. If GS in Nigeria truly represents a fully realized model of liberal education, heretofore unacknowledged in the USA, then it stands to rewrite the entire timeline of liberal education's international diffusion as well as the place and prominence of Africa in this HE trend. Thus, bringing these two discourses into conversation with each other is essential if researchers are to assess the global form and impact of liberal education in an authentic way.

In order to resolve the disconnect between the American and Nigerian literatures, it is appropriate to revisit Godwin's (2013) set of criteria for recognizing liberal education programs around the world. The methods of Godwin's dissertation allowed only for inventorying liberal education programs with a readily accessible online presence. This methodological choice disadvantaged, and likely led to the underrepresentation of, liberal education curricula in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, many of the sources describing GS at UNN are only available in hard-copy and are only accessible via an in-person visit to Nsukka (Nwosu, 2017a; Nwosu,

2017b; Ugwu, Ngwu, & Ajah, 2019). However, just because a curriculum is not well documented online does not mean that it is not an example of liberal education. If GS meets Godwin's criteria, then the narrative that American scholars have provided about the sparseness of African liberal education initiatives is noncomprehensive and warrants expansion. In Table 1 (see APPENDIX D), I illustrate how the GS curriculum, as recently portrayed by the SGS at UNN and its faculty, aligns with Godwin's criteria. Not only does UNN identify GS as liberal education (University of Nigeria, n.d.), thus meeting Godwin's first criterion, but the curriculum also includes all of the components necessary to satisfy Godwin's alternative set of criteria for programs that do not self-identify (Godwin, 2013; Nwosu, 2017a). Therefore, according to the standards they themselves set, American researchers must revise their understanding of international liberal education to include Nigerian GS.

Indeed, given its longevity at UNN, proliferation across the national HE landscape, and distinctively Nigerian character, GS deserves a place of prominence in any future inventories of liberal education outside of the USA. Moreover, it is entirely possible, and perhaps likely, that the omission of GS from publicized compendiums of liberal education is not anomalous, but instead represents just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Greater inclusiveness promises to not only alter the quality and assumptions of the Western discourse on international liberal education, but may also initiate transnational conversations that provide space for educators in Africa and elsewhere to speak to their as yet unnoticed and unsung experiences with liberal education. Such dialog would allow for much needed critique of the ubiquitous American hegemony and Western-centrism in the literature on liberal education across the globe.

All that said, despite having established here that GS is a liberal education curriculum and problematizing the lack of attention it has received in the USA, my study still must contend

with, and respond to, the generally descriptive nature of the literature reviewed in this chapter, and especially to the lack of attention paid to faculty as curricular agents. Within the Nigerian literature on GS at UNN faculty have arguably been the curriculum's most ardent chroniclers, producing numerous descriptions and appraisals of the SGS and its courses (Pettit, 1969; Oluikpe, 1984, 1987; Okonkwo, 1986; Nwosu, 2017a, 2017b; Ugwu, Ngwu, & Ajah, 2019). However, there remains little to no empirical scholarship *about* faculty perspectives as they engage with the curriculum and the forces that have shaped it. Ezeocha's (1977) interview study with returning MSU advisors represents the exceptional case that engaged faculty in a systematic way, but it is severely dated and problematically focused on the experiences of American rather than Nigerian educators. The dearth of empirical attention in this area brings my research questions, as outlined in Chapter 1, front and center. Through the application of my theoretical framework, wedding a glonacal perspective (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002) on curricular change to the study of faculty sensemaking and agency, my research stands to illuminate how liberal education is, and was historically, comprehended, negotiated, and adapted in the context of a Nigeria university. In the following chapter, I introduce the methods that I employed in this study of the GS at UNN.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODS

As outlined in Chapter 1, my theoretical framework applies a glonacal lens (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002) to explore the sensemaking and agency of SGS faculty members as they navigate the forces that influence the GS curriculum at UNN over time. In this research, I apply my theoretical framework through a qualitative case study design. It is important to note that my field research was conducted in two phases. The first phase was conducted at UNN in 2019 and the second phase was conducted through on-line follow-up interactions with a selection of my interviewees in the latter half of 2020. As such, in this chapter I refer first to methods I applied on-site at UNN followed by a discussion of 2020's remote follow-up research.

## Case Study

### Research Paradigm

My research questions concern the processes of faculty sensemaking and agency in the particular, real-world context of the SGS at UNN. Therefore, I selected qualitative case study research as my methodology, because case studies are well suited to the exploration of the particularities of a phenomenon or entity—a *case*—in its specific context(s), especially when "the boundary between the case and its contextual conditions—in both spatial and temporal dimensions—may be blurred" (Yin, 2011, p. 6). Case study research though comes in a number of varieties with different underlying assumptions and goals depending on the researcher's *research paradigm*. Research paradigms represent the varied epistemological and ontological "places to stand" in research depending on the researcher's beliefs about knowledge and "truth" (Sipe & Constable, 1996, p. 153, 155).

Some case study researchers, such as the previously cited Robert Yin, demonstrate a more "positivist" stance to the method of case research, seeking to establish "facts" in their cases

that can speak to a single or universalizable "truth" (Sipe & Constable, 1996; Yazan, 2015). Others, like Robert Stake, bring a more "interpretivist" (or "constructivist") lens to case studies (Yazan, 2015), holding that "truths" are many and co-constructed between the researcher and the research participants (Sipe & Constable, 1996). Given that my study deals with interpreting the lived truths of GS faculty members (my participants), this research is more in accord with the interpretivist paradigm represented by Stake. That said, in qualitative inquiry "the flexible use of diverse theoretical and methodological resources"—referred to as "qualitative-inquiry-as-bricolage"—is an accepted practice that not only does not jeopardize methodological rigor, but "claims its own form of rigor" (Hammersley, 2008, p. 65). Therefore, in my interpretivist case study I still refer to Yin's work where his 'theoretical and methodological resources' yield utility in my inquiry.

Lastly, Sipe and Constable (1996) remind scholars that research "can have several 'moments' where different paradigms are employed for different purposes" (p. 153). So, while my study of GS at UNN is in many ways a typical interpretivist inquiry, I also draw upon the principals of "Critical Theory" at various 'moments' throughout this manuscript. Critical theorists "agree with interpretivists that there are multiple truths, but believe that there is one truth which undergirds all the rest, and is not dependent on who is observing it; that truth is the reality of [disparities of] power" (p. 158). I am a relatively wealthy, White, male American who brings an inordinate reserve "power" and privilege to the study of higher education in a formerly colonized, developing, and non-Western context—Nigeria. Therefore, in the section on my "Positionality" later in this chapter I discuss how a *Critical* commitment guided both my engagement with my Nigerian interviewees as well as the interpretations I offer in my research findings.

**Studying "Cases"**

The characteristics of cases vary, but a case is typically a bounded system with its own history, context, and actors that all need to be accounted for and delineated (Stake, 2005). In my study, the case is the GS curriculum at UNN and the actors of interest are faculty. I selected the SGS at UNN as my site due to its uniqueness in terms of character, longevity, and national impact as described in Chapters 1 and 2, and its absence from the extant literature on liberal education in Africa (see the following section on "Site Selection"). As discussed in the preceding section, choosing to conduct a case study does not represent adherence to any specific method(s) or ontological or epistemological positions, the *how* of inquiry, but rather a choice of *what* to study—the case (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2011). Case studies can either be pursued out of intrinsic interest in the nuances of a particular case or out of a desire to generalize to a wider phenomenon that the case is representative of, but most studies do not fit exclusively into either of these categories (Stake, 2005). Likewise, my study is both concerned with the particularities of GS at UNN and with what can be inferred about liberal education in Nigeria and Africa from the case of GS.

It is important to acknowledge that case studies, especially those relying on qualitative data and interpretivist paradigms as in this study, are unlikely to produce the "statistical generalizations" yielded up in more quantitative and positivistic research. However, they can lead to "theoretical generalization" (Blatter, 2008; Stake, 2005), or what Yin (2011) calls "analytical generalizability". Theoretical generalization amounts to "using a study's theoretical framework to establish a logic that might be applicable to other situations" (Yin, 2011, p. 18). Such a 'logic' allows the researcher to draw "interpretive inferences" from the "observable objects" of the case to produce "meaningful abstract concepts" to inform future studies (Blatter,

2008, p. 69). Consequently, in my study I consistently rely on the theoretical framework described in Chapter 1, particularly the spatial dimensions of Marginson and Rhoades (2002) glonacal framework, as the lens for examining faculty sensemaking and agency at UNN (see the section on "Data Analysis" later in this chapter). However, given my theoretical affinity with the interpretivist case research of Stake, I apply the more "distinctive label" of 'theoretical generalization' rather than Yin's alternate terminology of 'analytical generalization' throughout this report (Blatter, 2008, p. 69).

In the following sections, I outline my methods of site selection, data collection, and data analysis and explain how they fit with my theoretical framework. I conclude with a discussion of the reliability and trustworthiness of my work, my own positionality, and the limitations inherent in this research.

## Site Selection and On-Site Research

### Liberal Education in Africa

As described in Chapter 2, sub-Saharan Africa has been labeled an "underrepresented region" (Godwin, 2013, p. 196) by Western scholars of liberal education's global spread. Consistent with this designation, very few African liberal education curricula have been identified by researchers and scholarship on liberal education in African contexts is especially sparse. However, with the exception of Godwin's (2013) dissertation, little to no empirical research exists to support Africa's "underrepresented" status, and Godwin's data collection methods problematically disadvantaged developing nations and regions such as Nigeria and Africa. Thus, I view Africa not as an *underrepresented* region, but rather as an *underexplored* region in the study of global liberal education. Early on in the conceptualization of my research agenda, I focused in on African liberal education as a topic worthy of greater attention and

analysis. This focus, which emerged from my engagement with the literature on the international diffusion of liberal education, was reinforced by my past experience doing research in sub-Saharan Africa, as described in the section on "Positionality" later in this chapter. In the following sections, I describe how I narrowed the focus of my study down to the GS curriculum at UNN specifically and explain how I gained access to the SGS as a site.

**Site Identification**

As noted above, I decided to study liberal education in sub-Saharan Africa to counter the dearth of attention this region has received in the American literature on global liberal education. I contend that the present consensus— that Africa is home to relatively few liberal education programs and that these all appeared in just the past few decades—is not only inaccurate but also marginalizing to African educators who strive to deliver liberal education curricula. Furthermore, with an in-depth focus on a particular African HEI, my research is positioned to fill the need for institutional case studies that delineate the particular forces "specific to institutions, programs, courses or individuals" engaged in liberal education in this underexamined region (Godwin, 2013, p. 115). However, the very dearth of scholarship on African liberal education that highlighted the need for such a study also made identifying a promising research site challenging. Unsure of the way forward, I enlisted the help of a reference librarian working in the Africana Collection of the MSU Library (MSU Library, n.d.). The librarian was the first to inform me about the historical collaboration between MSU and UNN in the 1960s. This inter-institutional connection turned out to be a key, though initially unforeseen, factor in the site identification process.

My discussions with the librarian led me to both the "University of Nigeria Program Records" collection (MSU Archives, 2011) and a few secondary sources (Ezeocha, 1977; Pettit,

1969) available through the MSU library. As I dove into these sources, along with others gathered online, and compared what was known about the GS curriculum at UNN to the American literature on global liberal education it became increasingly obvious that GS was unique in ways that could not be accounted for by present Western scholarship. Not only is GS virtually undocumented in the American literature, but it has been in place for decades longer than the other African liberal education programs that I identified (Pettit, 1969) and has in recent decades achieved an ubiquity in Nigerian higher education (Ogbeide, 2018) that challenges liberal education's purportedly peripheral position relative to "mainstream" higher education in most national contexts (Godwin, 2013, 2015b, 2018a). Furthermore, MSU has maintained ties with UNN, albeit sporadically, over the last half century and I intuited that this relationship might ease my access to the SGS as a case site. In the following section I describe how I leveraged the relationship between MSU and UNN to gain access for my 2019 on-site research in Nsukka.

**Access**

With a focus on GS at UNN established, I began the process of gaining access to—that is, receiving an invitation to visit—the SGS to conduct field research. I found the staff of the African Studies Center, and especially the Alliance for African Partnership (AAP) (Alliance for African Partnership, n.d.), at MSU who work with African educators, including those at UNN, to be an essential resource in this regard. In spring 2019, I met with a senior AAP staff member to discuss the potential of doing research at UNN. This staff member was incredibly generous in helping me to network with UNN stakeholders, including the then-Dean of the SGS, and not only helped to facilitate my visit to UNN but also advised me through the process of getting a visa to travel to Nigeria. I made the decision to conduct preliminary field research at UNN in

August 2019, rather than after completing and defending my dissertation proposal, in collaboration with my dissertation advisor as a result of being awarded a Sheldon Cherney Endowed Scholarship in Graduate Studies in Education Overseas (MSU College of Education, n.d.). Funds from this scholarship made it financially feasible for me to travel to and from Nigeria, arrange lodging on UNN's campus, and pay for a costly Nigerian visa. With these logistical concerns taken care of and a letter of invitation from the Vice Chancellor of UNN in hand, I prepared to travel to Nsukka and begin collecting data as described in the following section on my on-site research.

**2019 On-Site Research**

Having identified the SGS as my research site and negotiated access with the assistance of stakeholders at both MSU and UNN, I undertook a three-week visit to UNN in August of 2019. With funds from the Sheldon Cherney Endowed Scholarship I purchased round-trip airfare to Enugu, a regional capital roughly an hour outside of Nsukka, and secured room and board at a guest lodge on campus. At the outset, I intended this three-week visit to be a pilot study chiefly centered on the collection of primary documents concerning GS that were unavailable to me in East Lansing (see the following section on "Primary Documents"). While I also hoped to network with SGS faculty and potentially identify likely interviewees, I anticipated making a return visit to Nsukka in 2020 to conduct interviews with faculty. As such, I did not come prepared for interviews with either a protocol or with an IRB approval or exemption from MSU.

Before leaving for Nigeria, I was put in contact with an SGS lecturer who would act as my primary liaison while on campus. My liaison worked with me to reach out to faculty and administrators (i.e., the Dean) to negotiate entry to spaces on campus where the primary documents I was interested in could be found. Early on in this process however, it became clear

that there was widespread interest in my study among the faculty and many were willing, if not eager, to speak with me in a more formal way sooner rather than later. While initially hesitant to change my seemingly well-laid plans, I decided to embrace the spontaneity of the research process and move forward with interviews. With remote assistance from my dissertation advisor my study was granted IRB exempt status and I developed an interview protocol with feedback from both my advisor and UNN liaison. I determined criteria for selecting interviewees and shared these with my liaison who worked with me to select a pool of interviewees, contact them, and schedule interviews (see the later section on "Interviews"). I did not know it at the time, but the decision to interview faculty in 2019 would have a profound impact on the character and direction of my research.

Initially, I framed my study as concerning the long-term evolution and adaptation of the GS curriculum, that is curricular change, with a focus on examples of *Nigerianization*, the locally resonant variation of indigenization described by several sources I reviewed before my visit (Pettit, 1969; Okonkwo, 1986; Okafor, 2012). I was already familiar with Marginson and Rhoades' (2002) concept of glonacality, and this theoretical perspective informed my interview protocol, but I presumed that the really interesting story to be told about GS at UNN had to do with the *local* and *national* dimensions of the glonacal framework as the *global* diffusion of liberal education seemed to have already been addressed by the American scholarship discussed in Chapter 2. However, I came to reassess this preconception through interactions with GS faculty members at UNN. Throughout my visit, I kept daily fieldnotes and one entry from August 24th is especially informative here:

> The narrative that I came to Nsukka to explore—that the GS curriculum has been continuously *Nigerianized* over the years—is now beginning to seem too one

> dimensional. Some… interviewees… definitely highlight the growing centrality of Nigerian material in GS, but others… emphasize GS as a vehicle for integrating Nigeria in the 21st century globalized world. And some… don't see it as either-or at all (emphasis in original).

Though Nigerianization, and national and local forces broadly, did end up proving important in my findings (see Chapter 5), through ongoing reflection on my data I came to recognize that this concept alone did not comprehensively describe all of the dynamics I observed in the SGS. I realized that the story I ought to tell—the narrative that my participants were intent to impart—concerned the forces the influenced the GS curriculum from *all* spatial dimensions (global, national, and local) without presupposing at the outset that any were more consequential or could be easily divorced from the others. Furthermore, it struck me as significant that my interviewees brought such a diversity of perspectives to their assessments of and engagements with the curriculum. While I arrived in Nsukka intending to examine curricular change writ large, the interview process shifted my gaze to the unique sensemaking and agency of my faculty participants in their roles as front-line curricular agents. Therefore, my 2019 research in Nsukka fundamentally influenced my theoretical framework, and with it my research questions, wedding a glonacal perspective on curricular change to the study of faculty sensemaking and agency as described in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

## Data Collection

My study is qualitative in nature and thus relies on qualitative data, namely discursive data from textual sources and interviews. An essential tool for ensuring the trustworthiness of any qualitative case study is *triangulation*, or the collection of converging data from multiple sources to ensure the reliability of findings (Stake, 2005). Yin (2011) contends that studies that

rely on three or more data sources are the most rigorous (p. 13). Therefore, I collected data from three sources—(1) primary institutional documents produced by UNN and the SGS, (2) interviews with faculty, and (3) secondary written sources authored by and/or about GS faculty and their curriculum. The analysis of these data sources is augmented by the reflective fieldnotes that I composed daily during my three-week visit to UNN in 2019.

**Primary Documents**

In this study, primary institutional documents from UNN serve to illustrate the official narrative projected publicly by UNN as an institution about the GS curriculum, its contents, history, and context. It is against the backdrop of this official narrative that the information gathered in collaboration with my faculty interviewees was evaluated and analyzed. I principally rely on various editions of the UNN Academic Prospectus/Calendar (N=13) and the SGS Undergraduate Handbook (N=8) that describe the contents of the GS curriculum over the 1961-2019 timespan (see Table 2 in APPENDIX E). The UNN Academic Calendars (called Prospectuses through the early 1960s) are the official academic catalogs of UNN and include succinct descriptions of all academic programs and courses offered by the University, including the GS curriculum. The SGS Undergraduate Handbooks are produced semi-regularly by the SGS and document the curriculum in greater detail than the Academic Calendars, including discussions of the mission(s), history, administration, and curricular content of GS and its constituent Units. When appropriate, I supplement the narrative that emerged from these sources with information from other primary documents such as GS course textbooks and lists of lecture topics, though these latter textual sources do not cover all time periods or courses with equal comprehensiveness.

These primary documents, especially the SGS Undergraduate Handbooks, are for the most part only available in hard copy at UNN and I collected them during my August 2019 visit to Nigeria. The collection of institutional documents, what might be called archival research, is challenging in Nigeria due to the sporadic nature of preservation. After finding numerous editions of the UNN Academic Calendar at the MSU Main Library in early 2019, I expected most of my data collection in Nigeria that August to take place at UNN's formal archival institution, the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library. However, relatively few documents emerged from the time I spent at the library (see Table 3 in APPENDIX E). Literary scholar Aleida Assmann (2011) reminds researchers that "archives are selective… they are in no way all-inclusive," but fortunately "there is not only [formal and] intentional but also [ad hoc and] accidental preservation when *hidden deposits* are discovered" (p. 337, emphasis added). Such hidden deposits became important in my research and at UNN took the form of self-curated assemblages of curricular artifacts (Academic Handbooks, textbooks, etc.) on bookshelves in the offices of SGS faculty members and administrators. I was fortunate to gain access to these deposits, and to find preserved what materials I did, as these privately curated assemblages are not open to the public in the same way the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library is. I had to know and build rapport with SGS stakeholders to negotiate entry to these deposits and, indeed, to even know they existed at all.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter 2, MSU's historic collaboration with UNN in the 1960s resulted in a sizable archive of early primary sources and official and semi-official documents being stored at MSU's Archives and Historical Collections—the "University of Nigeria Program Records" collection (MSU Archives, 2011). I visited this collection over a three-day period in the spring of 2019 in anticipation of my visit to UNN in August. The "University of Nigeria

Program Records" collection is not concerned exclusively with GS, but instead includes records related to every aspect of the curriculum and administration at UNN that MSU advisors had a hand in. One such advisor, Lincoln Pettit, used the collection to synthesize what was known about the GS program specifically following his return from UNN (Pettit, 1969). So, while the return visits to the MSU archive I had planned for 2020 were inhibited by the outbreak of COVID-19 which forced the archive's closure, I was able to draw upon Pettit's monograph (discussed in the succeeding section on "Secondary Sources") to supplement what I learned from the primary documents gathered at UNN.

**Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews with GS faculty represent the core of my methodology as they can most saliently speak to how glonacal forces inform the sensemaking and agency of curricular actors, as outlined in my theoretical framework. Like Hill (2019) I am most interested in the perspectives of "curricular change agents" (p. 13) which I reconceptualize for my study as faculty with sufficient seniority in the SGS to have witnessed and participated in successive adaptations of the GS curriculum over the years and/or those who have taken on positions of administrative authority in the SGS, namely the Unit Coordinators (or department chairs). Therefore, the number (N=11) and characteristics of faculty that I selected to interview in 2019, with the help of my UNN liaison, was determined by my research problem and the structure of the SGS (Kvale, 1992). The GS curriculum is subdivided into four Units (or departments)—Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and the Use of English. Under the Use of English Unit there is also a required course on the Use of the Library taught by staff of the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library. So, I elected to interview two senior instructors from each of the four Units (including each of the current Coordinators), the informal Coordinator of the Use of the Library

course, and an emeritus professor who began teaching GS courses in the 1970s to provide a historical perspective, for a total of ten interviewees. In the Natural Sciences Unit, one additional faculty member expressed a deep interest in participating in my study and I made an exception by choosing to include this interviewee, bringing the total number of interviewees up to eleven (see Table 4 in APPENDIX F).

The decision to interview faculty during my 2019 visit to UNN was last minute, as explicated in the earlier discussion of my 2019 on-site research. Therefore, the interview protocol that I developed, with feedback from my UNN liaison and MSU dissertation advisor, was very loosely structured (see APPENDIX G). I received permission from my participants to audio record all interviews and all interviewees signed an informed consent form. Each interview was conducted in-person in faculty offices at the SGS and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. All interviewees were encouraged to provide a pseudonym, though several opted not to do so and were assigned a pseudonym my me. Most interviews were one-on-one conversations between myself and the interviewee, but due to scheduling difficulties I interviewed all three of the Natural Sciences faculty members at the same time in a focus group format, for a total of nine interviews with eleven faculty. After returning from Nigeria, I used the online transcription service Rev.com to convert the audio files into readable text. Over the next several months I reviewed each of the audio files and written transcripts, and wrote analytic memos on each of the interviews as well as an additional memo that dealt with all of the interviews holistically.

As acknowledged in my discussion of the 2019 on-site research, my research questions evolved alongside my theoretical framework and became more refined following my return from Nsukka in 2019. So, I conducted “virtual” (i.e., online) follow-up interviews with a selection of my faculty participants in 2020 (Egan, 2008; Fontana & Frey, 2005). I used the summer of 2020,

funded by an MSU College of Education Summer Research Fellowship, to develop a rigorous interview protocol (see APPENDIX H) for these virtual conversations that included a brief (2 page) memo outlining my preliminary findings from the data gathered in 2019 for my interviewees to "member check" (Creswell & Miller, 2000). With assistance from my UNN liaison, I reached out to the interviewees from 2019 requesting that they participate in the follow-up conversations. Of my original eleven participants, I heard back from five and three (N=3) agreed to speak with me again. One returning interviewee requested a face-to-face interview, which was conducted over WhatsApp's video-call function, while the remaining two opted to respond to my follow-up questions in writing through "email interviews" (Egan, 2008). The three returning faculty participants each signed a second informed consent form (see APPENDIX I) and I once again used Rev.com to transcribe the single face-to-face interview.

**Secondary Sources**

While little has been written *about* faculty sensemaking and agency in the SGS, faculty have arguably been GS's most ardent chroniclers, authoring numerous descriptions and appraisals of the curriculum over the decades. Such secondary sources not only augment the information available from primary documents, but also represent examples of faculty meaning construction and dissemination, albeit written for particular audiences and purposes, that can serve to triangulate—that is, to either reinforce or problematize—the findings from my interviews. The SGS's faculty are not merely teachers, but also researchers who produce scholarship about both the GS curriculum and "issues of… interests in their various disciplines" (University of Nigeria, 2019, p. 18). Due to this wide range of research focuses, I was selective in choosing the secondary sources to be analyzed in this study. In this section, I delineate the

secondary sources that were available to me and provide rationales for what was (and was not) included in my analysis.

The secondary sources that I analyzed are those that represent faculty scholarship about the GS curriculum specifically, as concerns my study, rather than research in their individual disciplines. Such sources fall into three categories. First, there are those sources authored *by* GS faculty about the curriculum, such as Pettit's (1969) monograph, Okonkwo's (1986) chapter, and Nwosu's (2017a) edited book. Second, there is a single source, Ezeocha's (1977) dissertation, that employed interviews with GS faculty and thus can empirically speak to faculty experiences with the GS curriculum. Third, there are papers submitted by faculty at conferences directly concerned with GS and its role in Nigerian (and African) society in the 1980s (Oluikpe, 1984, 1987) and 2010s (Nwosu, 2017b). Admittedly, there are limitations to both Pettit's (1969) monograph and Ezeocha's (1977) dissertation, namely that they concern American faculty from MSU who taught at UNN in the 1960s rather than Nigerian educators, but I chose to include them because they are the only sources that provide first-hand accounts of the GS curriculum's formative years in the mid-20$^{th}$ century. Such early sources are essential as they speak to a time period that cannot be accounted for by the living memory of my interviewees and therefore enable me to extend the narrative of my case study back to the very founding of UNN. Like the primary sources discussed previously, I collected some secondary sources, specifically the 2017 SGS conference proceedings (Nwosu, 2017b), at UNN in August 2019 while others were accessible from the MSU library (Pettit, 1969; Ezeocha, 1977; Oluikpe, 1984, 1987) or sent to me electronically by my hosts at UNN (Nwosu, 2017a).

There is also a body of secondary sources from UNN that I did *not* analyze in this study, though I do at times selectively refer to them to supplement information gathered from the

sources described in the preceding paragraph. This latter body of secondary scholarship for the most part demonstrates the research engagement of GS faculty with their primary disciplines, rather than reflections on the GS curriculum, and is therefore beyond the scope of my present research. For example, the 2019 SGS conference (Ugwu, Ngwu, & Ajah, 2019) accepted papers drawing on cross-disciplinary research broadly without a specific or unifying focus on the GS curriculum. Furthermore, the 2019 conference generated only a book of abstracts, rather than a compendium of complete papers as was the case for previous meetings (Nwosu, 2017b; Oluikpe, 1984, 1987), lessening the amount of usable written material available for analysis. Similarly, the *Journal of Liberal Studies*, the SGS's in-house scholarly publication since 1983 (Nwosu, 2017a), acts as a forum for GS faculty to showcase their individual and collaborative research rather than as a space for reflecting on the curriculum or their engagement with it. While these sources highlight GS faculty as scholars and knowledge producers, they do not speak to faculty members' sensemaking and agency as curricular agents.

## Data Analysis

For me, the process of data analysis began alongside data collection in 2019 as I composed analytic memos on the first phase of interviews, and analysis continued through the virtual follow-up interviews in 2020 and the composition of this dissertation. I continued the reflective "memoing" process as I worked to review the primary and secondary documents, and read (and *re*-read) the interview transcripts, collected over the past two years (Benaquisto, 2008a; Saldaña, 2008). The insights and patterns—relationships, commonalities, disjunctures—that emerged from this first pass through the data were essential as I prepared for the work of coding my final data.

Following the first phase of data collection, my initial methods of data analysis and coding were informed by the theories and concepts outlined in my theoretical framework, especially a glonacal perspective on curriculum and curricular change (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). The benefits of pre-selecting theory to deductively make sense of qualitative data, as opposed to inductively generating new codes and theory, are disputed in case study research (Stake, 2005) and coding procedures (Benaquisto, 2008a, 2008b), but starting with a well-formulated theoretical framework is especially helpful for novice case study researchers like myself (Yin, 2011). In my initial analysis, the spatial dimensions of the glonacal framework functioned as the "coding frame," or the "guiding conceptual scheme for [my] research study... for classifying, organizing, and summarizing raw data" (Benaquisto, 2008b, p. 88). Therefore, I began analysis by employing a "pattern-matching logic" that enabled me to "compare [my] empirically based pattern[s] (based on the data [I collected])" with the global-national-local scheme predicted by the glonacal perspective (Yin, 2011, p. 16). As I moved beyond the initial phase of coding into more focused coding to develop themes and findings from my data, I remained vigilant for additional concepts, ideas, and patterns that did not neatly align with the dimensions of glonacality (Benaquisto, 2008a). While it was entirely possible that new patterns and relationships might emerge from my research, by foregrounding the spatial dimensions of glonacality I maintained the needed scaffolding to guide my initial engagement with data on the forces that influence faculty sensemaking and agency in UNN's SGS. Furthermore, ongoing adherence to my theoretical framework during data analysis increased the potential that my study might illuminate theoretically generalizable themes that can be utilized in future studies on liberal education in sub-Saharan Africa more broadly (Blatter, 2008).

In the 21st century, the use of qualitative data analysis software has become an increasingly common means of easing the management and retrieval of qualitative data as well as organizing and keeping track of codes (Benaquisto, 2008a). However, due to my personal preferences, work-style, and approach to data analysis, I opted to conduct coding by hand. Following the initial composition of field notes and memoing on data from 2019, I developed a "codebook", using Microsoft Office software, to "structure and interpret the data" (Benaquisto, 2008b, p. 88; Saldaña, 2008). I then distilled, or "lumped" (Saldaña, 2008, p. 19), my numerous discrete codes down to a manageable number of more comprehensive and descriptive themes, which I termed *forces*, that both served as the basis of my findings (described in Chapter 5) and that I shared with my returning interviewees, or 'member checkers,' in 2020 (see APPENDIX H). By re-interrogating and refining my own interpretations through the sensemaking of my participants I further ensured the trustworthiness of my findings, as discussed in the subsequent section on "member checking."

## Reliability and Trustworthiness

Given that qualitative research is unsuited for producing statistical generalizability, wherein a single case is quantitatively generalized to a larger universe of cases, scholars have debated numerous metrics and procedures for establishing validity, variously called authenticity, trustworthiness, reliability, credibility, and goodness, in qualitative studies (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this section, I make the case for why my findings can be viewed as reliable and trustworthy by scholars concerned with liberal education in African contexts, faculty sensemaking and agency, and curricular change. I employed three mechanism for demonstrating reliability and trustworthiness in my work—thick description, triangulation, and member

checking—and I describe my positionality in relation to the present study to account for my own experiences, biases, and preconceptions.

**Thick Description**

In his seminal collection of anthropological essays, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), the late Clifford Geertz offered the concept of *thick description* (or *rich* description) whereby interpretive (that is, qualitative) data can be intelligibly conveyed in a reliable way. "The aim [of thick description] is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions… by engaging them exactly with complex specifics" (p. 28). In my study of GS at UNN, I richly describe the curriculum's context, underlying forces, and participants (i.e. faculty) to engender a feeling in my readers "that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). This practice ensures ongoing attention to the particularities of the SGS and the experiences of its faculty in my work even as I labor to evince the theoretical generalizability of my findings.

**Triangulation**

As described previously, triangulation across various sources of data strengthens the trustworthiness of findings by highlighting areas of convergence among sources of information to support the themes identified in qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Miller, 2000) and is an oft-cited means for demonstrating reliability in case study research (Stake, 2005). In my study, I triangulated three sources of data—primary documents, interviews, and secondary sources—to elucidate the forces that influence faculty members' perspectives on and engagement with the GS curriculum at UNN over time. The institutional narrative derived from primary and secondary documents was cross-checked with the interpretations and insights from faculty during the interviews. By continuously re-interrogating these data through the lens of my

theoretical framework, triangulation further supported trustworthiness "by illuminating how data confirms, complements, and/or complicates aspects of theory" (Hill, 2019, p. 65).

**Member Checking**

In my study, reliability was not only be substantiated by my own reflection, description, and methods of analysis, but also by the perspectives of and repeated engagement with my interviewees. Member checking "consists of taking data and interpretations back to… participants… so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). As part of the virtual follow-up interviews conducted in 2020, I shared a concise memo on my preliminary findings with each of the returning participants in order to get feedback on my initial meaning construction and to identify areas in the most need of clarification (see APPENDIX H). By conducting interviews in two phases, separated by interviewee feedback through member checking, I thus ensured that that my findings authentically reflect the experiences, voices, and sensemaking of Nigerian GS faculty at UNN. Furthermore, my primary liaison at UNN, himself a GS faculty member, was perpetually generous in his willingness to discuss this research and my own ongoing sensemaking in a more informal way. While my liaison was not designated an interviewee, and therefore not explicitly cited in the findings of this study (Chapter 5), this dissertation is in many ways a tribute to his experience, expertise, and magnanimity.

**Positionality**

In qualitative research, where knowledge arises from the backgrounds of and interactions between both the researcher and the participants, scholars must consider who is framing the inquiry and whose voice is privileged in its telling (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Therefore, in this

section I describe my positionality—my personal experiences and identities—as it impacts my relationship to and presentation of the present study.

First, and perhaps most importantly, I am the product of liberal education. As an undergraduate I attended a liberal arts college (see APPENDIX A) and my course of study was scaffolded by the same domains of knowledge represented in the GS curriculum at UNN—the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and English. My college years were among the most formative in my life and I continue to draw from and reflect on the rich engagement with the liberal arts and sciences that I experienced. After college, I pursued a specialized, professional master's degree and spent several years working as a HE administrator in two vocational fields (business and medicine). These later experiences did not rob me of my appreciation for liberal education. On the contrary, they brought the impact of liberal education on my own life into sharper focus and informed my decision to engage with liberal education during my doctoral studies. Thus, I am not an unbiased observer of liberal education curricula, but rather an ardent proponent of them.

Second, while in college I also had the opportunity to study abroad in sub-Saharan Africa, namely in Tanzania. I studied at a local university and conducted my first-ever field research while in Africa (Cermak, 2013). This experience induced in me an abiding interest in the developing world generally and in Africa specifically. I have no doubt that without my experience in Tanzania I would not have selected an African university—UNN—as my case site in this study. Thus, I am not indifferent to the work and values of African educators. Instead, I hope to advocate for and empower them through my research. However, I must acknowledge my identity, and with it my relative privilege and power, as a non-African white man from a wealthy, developed nation if I am to authentically portray the lived experiences—the

sensemaking and agency—of African faculty members in the present study. Such an acknowledgement is especially important given the predominance of American voices (like my own) in the current literature on global liberal education, as discussed in Chapter 2, and the complicated history of (neo)colonialism in Nigeria. My previously stated critical commitment to explore "how sensemaking processes are wrapped in and often reproduce historical conditions and/or relations of power and privilege" (Gonzales, 2013, p. 184) demanded that I center the voices and "authentic experiential knowledge" of Nigerian GS faculty, rather than my own, at every stage of data collection, analysis, and the presentation of my findings (Godwin, 2015a, p. 229). I have attempted to do so honestly and transparently by giving voice to my interviewees through thick description and extended quotations, and empowering their ongoing involvement through member checking, as well as by utilizing primary and secondary textual sources of Nigerian provenance whenever possible.

## Limitations

My study, like all research, comes with some inherent limitations and assumptions that may affect the findings and should be addressed up front. First, serious security concerns and infrastructural constraints make traveling to and doing research in Nigeria challenging for foreign scholars, especially for those with my intersecting identities (race/ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status). A U.S. State Department travel advisory posted in October 2019, shortly after my return from Nsukka, notes that Americans should "reconsider travel to Nigeria due to crime, terrorism, civil unrest, [and] kidnapping" (U.S. Department of State, 2019). Furthermore, the state of Nigeria's public infrastructure makes travel to, from, and within the country an expensive and uncertain proposition. For example, while I was able to fly into the nearby city of Enugu as scheduled in August 2019, the Enugu airport was closed for repairs indefinitely and

without warning during my visit forcing me to fly out of the more distant Abuja airport. This change required that I contract ground transportation to travel across the Nigerian countryside which itself posed new and unforeseen safety concerns. Due to these constraints, as well as the ramifications on international travel posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, I elected to conduct my follow-up interviews online rather than making a return visit to UNN in 2020. Case study researchers highlight the utility of extended, direct observation at the case site for generating the thick, rich descriptions upon which such studies often rely (Stake, 2005). However, because of the aforementioned safety and health concerns, my study only draws upon three weeks of *in situ* observation at UNN's SGS, described in my 2019 fieldnotes. In order to counteract the limited amount of direct observation built into this study, I instead rely on the expert testimony of my interviewees because "when the researchers are not there to experience [an] activity for themselves, they have to ask those who did experience it" (Stake, 2005, p. 454).

Second, by foregrounding my theoretical framework at the outset of data analysis I assumed that my data would adhere to the global-national-local schema predicted by the glonacal perspective (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). As previously described, it is entirely appropriate that theoretical constructs "may be created or imposed by the researcher [during data analysis], who either derives them from the existing literature or may be influenced by the literature in their creation," as is the case with my theoretical framework (Benaquisto, 2008a, p. 86). However, such deductive, theory-driven strategies of data analysis require "staying alert to other possible concepts, ideas, and themes" that may not be accounted for by theory (p. 86). In this study, it was my responsibility as the researcher to make adjustments if and when new and novel themes emerged from my data.

## Conclusion

This study employs a case study research design to elucidate the forces that have and continue to influence the GS curriculum at UNN, as well as how SGS faculty make sense of these forces and exercise agency in relation to them. With the help of stakeholders at both MSU and UNN, I identified a research site—UNN's SGS—negotiated access to it and conducted the first phase of data collection and analysis in Nsukka in 2019, and complemented this work with remote follow-up interviews in 2020. In my case study, I rely on primary institutional documents, interviews with faculty, and secondary sources from UNN to answer my research questions. Data analysis and coding are buttressed by my theoretical framework through which I employed a "patter-matching logic" (Yin, 2011). The trustworthiness and reliability of my inquiry is reinforced by thick description, triangulation, member checking, and an acknowledgement of my own positionality as a researcher.

In the following chapters, I present the findings of my case study research. First, in Chapter 4 I describe the evolution of the GS curriculum, from its founding to the present. In Chapter 5, I elucidate the forces that have influenced the GSP at the program-level overtime and analyze how today's GS faculty make sense and exercise agency as they navigate these disjunctive and imbricated forces in their own courses and Units.

# CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY

In this chapter, I outline the "case" of my case study. That is, I offer a historical overview of not only General Studies (GS), but of the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) and of Nigeria as a nation in order to provide the necessary historic and cultural context for the findings that follow and emphasize their significance in the field of international and comparative higher education. First, at the nation-state level, there is Nigeria. Nigeria has long been termed the "Giant of Africa" both for its enormous population—nearly 200 million and growing (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018)—as well as its economic might on the continent and its wealth of natural resources, especially crude oil (BBC, 2019; Whiting, 2019). Nigeria is also a cultural hub for all of sub-Saharan Africa, leading the way in the entertainment industries of film and music and producing numerous literary and artistic luminaries (BBC, 2019; Whiting, 2019).

Yet, for all of these accomplishments and natural advantages, Nigeria today remains mired in a state of chronic underdevelopment and unrest, stemming in no small measure from its century-long colonial subjugation by the British Empire. For a country with vast natural energy reserves, a lack of reliable electricity in homes and institutions is shockingly commonplace due to poor infrastructure across the country (BBC, 2019; Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). Furthermore, endemic violence, terrorism, government corruption, and abject poverty among many citizens continue to plague Nigeria (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). The confounding nature of Nigeria as a nation—at once wealthy and creative while precariously friable on many levels—makes it a fascinating context in its own right, but even more so for higher education scholars when one considers its preeminence in postsecondary teaching and learning in Africa. With more than two-hundred universities spread across its thirty-six states, Nigeria boasts more tertiary educational institutions than any other African nation (Fatunde, 2020; Webometrics,

2020). At the same time, Nigeria also sends more students to study overseas than any other African country with more than eighty-five thousand Nigerians studying abroad as of 2017 (McCarthy, 2020).

With such an intriguing and complex postsecondary configuration, Nigeria almost seems to defy the researcher in choosing a single topic, institution, or curriculum to study. However, the impact of the General Studies Programme (GSP), as first originated at UNN and subsequently reproduced across Nigerian higher education, is unique enough relative to the extant literature on liberal education globally to seize one's attention. The consensus among scholars focused on liberal education in other non-USA contexts has heretofore been that "liberal education's development remains a phenomenon occurring on the periphery of—without a great deal of influence on—mainstream… higher education" in most countries (Godwin, 2013, p. 233). This is not the case with GS, which has achieved ubiquity within "mainstream" higher education in Nigeria. Indeed, a major point of pride for faculty and staff in UNN's School of General Studies (SGS) is that the program "pioneered" by their university has achieved national and regional significance, replicated by "countless tertiary institutions in and outside Nigeria" and across the whole of Africa (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2019, Dean's Welcome). Therefore, while much of the information that follows was alluded to in Chapter 2, in this chapter's history I weave the stories of Nigeria, UNN, and the SGS into a single common narrative so that the reader can experience how they overlap and mutually inform each other.

## The Story of General Studies: Past and Present

### Nigeria and the Colonial Experience

Nigeria, as a modern nation-state, was stitched together over more than a century by the forces of British colonialism. Those regions of West Africa that would become the country of

Nigeria fell under the British sphere of colonial influence in the early nineteenth century, and this coercive foreign force not only persisted until the middle of the twentieth century but continues to impact the lived realities of contemporary Nigerians (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). In colonial political structures, scholars contend that education, including universities, is one of myriad tools deployed by imperial governments to extend their reach and control over their overseas subjects (Enslin, 2017). However, for the bulk of the colonial period in West Africa the British government left the business of education to Christian missionaries. The result was a hodgepodge of educational offerings at all levels, varying in rigor, comprehensiveness, and philosophy (Lilford, 2012). The British Empire's first foray into tertiary education in Nigeria was the establishment of the "Higher College at Yaba," a technical and agricultural training school, in 1932 (Ezeoch, 1976; Lilford, 2012). The College at Yaba represented only a half-hearted experiment in providing postsecondary instruction in Nigeria, being unable to confer degrees on its graduates (Lilford, 2012) and instead merely enabling "Nigerians to become more useful to their colonial masters by becoming assistant officers, but not masters, in any area of study" (Ezeocha, 1977, p. 1). Indeed, it was not until the 1940s, when the momentum of Nigerian nationalism was driving down the Empire's "enthusiasm for the imperial adventure," that the British attempted to seriously systematize the colony's sundry educational institutions in a more holistic way (Lilford, 2012, p. 194).

As described in Chapter 2, the British government manifested this new-found commitment to educating its colonial subjects by commissioning two reports in 1945—the Asquith Report and the Elliot Report—that together represented an attempt to both describe the extant institutions of tertiary education in the Empire's colonies and to chart a path forward. The Asquith Report examined higher education across the UK's global colonial empire, while the

Elliot Report focused on West Africa including those regions that would become the nation of Nigeria (Hussey, 1945). The Asquith Report, the more comprehensive in scope of the two, outlined the British government's overall philosophy toward postsecondary education in its colonies. This philosophy mirrored the highly specialized form of tertiary learning that was in fashion in England during this period (Lilford, 2012), in which students focused "their studies on a single subject, often beginning at the secondary level before ever setting foot on a college campus" (Osunde, 1985, p. 50), with little to no attention paid to general or liberal education. Lilford contends that "specialized higher education [was] the product of a specific time and place, namely, imperial Britain in the immediate aftermath of World War II. It was never entirely suited to the needs of Britain's African colonies and less suited to postcolonial independent states" (2012, p. 190).

The Elliot Report in turn did not diverge from the overall philosophy of specialized education outlined in the Asquith Report, but its recommendations would ultimately have a more immediate impact on the trajectory of Nigerian higher education. Specifically, the report recommended that Nigeria's primary institution of higher learning be transferred from Yaba to Ibadan which offered greater space for future expansion (Hussey, 1945). This recommendation would culminate in 1948 with the founding University of Ibadan, Nigeria's first university. However, until 1962, two years after Nigerian independence, the university at Ibadan was not actually a university in an autonomous sense, but rather "a College of the University of London in a special relationship scheme" (University of Ibadan, 2018a). Ibadan's graduates were granted University of London degrees, took University of London examinations, and studied University of London content in their courses. Michigan State University advisor George Axinn, in an interview with Ezeocha (1977), noted that "at the University of Ibadan students were taught

British content because their exams were the same as those at the University of London (p. 87)… But since [the student was] not being prepared to immigrate to Europe, since he [was] being prepared to give leadership to his own nation in the years ahead, there was a deep irrelevance in that education system" (p. 89-90). This "deep irrelevance" was not lost on Nigerians, many of whom were aware that the British educational model "tilted the acquired knowledge in favour of the colonial master" (University of Nigeria Nuskka, 1992, p. 1). However, it would take the personal experiences and vision of a new Nigerian leader to point a fresh way forward.

**Coming to America: Nnamdi Azikiwe**

The history of General Studies at the University of Nigeria Nsukka, and thus of my research, is "ineluctably connected with the life and experience of the great Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. His experience and contact with and involvement in a panoptic and rich academic world gave birth to the dream of a broad-based university educational programme" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012, p. 5). Nnamdi "Zik" Azikiwe was born in Nigeria in 1904 at the height of British colonial rule (Poloma & Szelenyi, 2019). Growing up in the colonial context, he was inspired from an early age to overcome the circumscribed educational horizons of his birth and chose to pursue his post-secondary studies in the USA. "In 1930, Azikiwe graduated with his Bachelor of Arts degree from Lincoln University, and pursued his graduate studies in religion and anthropology, respectively, at Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania" (p. 641). His experiences in the United States, including his exposure to a broad-based model of liberal education so different from what was available in his home country, inspired Azikiwe to establish to new type of Nigerian university devoted to "constructive social progress and racial uplift" (p. 641).

In 1954, Azikiwe, by then Premier of the Eastern Region of Nigeria, led a delegation to both the USA and Europe in order to visit institutions of higher education that might serve as models for the kind of university he envisioned (Poloma & Szelenyi, 2019). The delegation concluded that any such university should demonstrate an "academic orientation… directed to the realities of Nigerian life with a view to meeting in some measure the cultural, social and economic needs of Nigeria" (Ezeocha, 1977, p. 3-4) through a multifaceted "emphasis on professional… technical, and [general knowledge] training" (Poloma & Szelenyi, 2019, p. 641). It was this broadened philosophy of education that directed Azikiwe and his colleagues to focus in on the American Land Grant University model during their search, culminating in the selection of Michigan State University (MSU), "an agricultural land grant institution… to help establish the University of Nigeria at Nsukka (UNN)" (p. 641). Assistance, in the forms of funding and shared expertise, was also solicited from the United States' International Cooperation Administration (now the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAid)) and British Inter-University Council (IUC) (Pettit, 1969, p. 1-4). The following year, in 1955, Azikiwe's vision began to become a reality when legislation enabling the creation of a new university was passed by the Government of the Eastern Region of Nigeria (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1961; Ezeocha, 1977).

The Eastern Region's new transnational partnerships were embodied in 1958 with an official visit from representatives from the USA and UK, namely "Dr. J. W. Cook, Vice Chancellor of the University of Exeter; Dr. John A. Hannah, President of Michigan State University; and Dr. Glen L. Taggart, Dean of International Programs at Michigan State University" (Ezeocha, 1977, p. 5). These advisors reaffirmed their respective institutions' commitment to the establishment of UNN and conferred with Azikiwe on the new University's

structure, curriculum, and activities so as to be of the greatest service possible to Nigeria and its people. However, "General Studies, as such, was not part of the three original academic blueprints in (a) the Nigerian Law of 1955, (b) the Cook-Hannah-Taggart Report of 1958, and (c) the [deliberations] of the Provisional Council" established to plan the University's launch (Pettit, 1969, p. 2-1). Such a foray into the provision of liberal education, which would eventually culminate in a wholly new model of general education in Africa, would have to wait until after the opening of UNN, planned to coincide with celebrations of Nigeria's independence (1961 UNN Prsopectus, p. 1) and Azikiwe's "installation as first head of state" (Poloma & Szelenyi, 2019, p. 641), in 1960.

**Early Years and Partners: The 1960s**

On October 7, 1960, just four days after Nigeria's national independence from the UK, the University of Nigeria was opened as the new Nation's first post-colonial university. UNN was located in the town of Nsukka in southeastern Nigeria (today's Enugu State) and Azikiwe was appointed as lifetime Chancellor (Poloma & Szelenyi, 2019). The Nation's shift to an elected government comprised of Nigerian officials was not, however, immediately reflected in the staffing at UNN. Most of the University's "senior-ranking administrators, including the first two vice-chancellors and the founding registrar, and the majority of faculty and staff… [were] Americans" (p. 643). Indeed, between 1960 and 1967 close to 150 faculty and staff from Michigan State University worked with "Nigerian partners to build and operate UNN" and to establish a comprehensive curriculum covering the "arts and letters, sciences, engineering and agriculture" (Michigan State University, 2020, p. 13). One such senior staff member, George Axinn of MSU, noted that the greater share of even the Nigerian-born faculty were trained outside of Nigeria, and thus "the Nigerian teaching history at Nsukka probably studied history in

London, or else he studied his history in Boston or wherever it was. But he didn't study the history of Nigeria" (Ezeocha, 1977, p. 137). Furthermore, official advisors at UNN included representatives not just from the USA and UK but also from other European nations, notably the Netherlands, and many essential student and academic services were initially provided by volunteers from foreign organizations such as "the [American] Peace Corps, the Canadian University Service Over Seas, and the [British] Graduate Volunteer Service Overseas" (Pettit, 1969, p. 5-32). In many ways, the formative years of UNN represented both a case study in international cooperation and reflected a Western-centrism that belied Nigeria's newly independent political status.

As previously noted, the General Studies Programme (GSP) was not part of UNN's original curriculum when the University opened in 1960. However, a precursor to the GS curriculum was soon in the works, and this too evinced the centrality of Western educators, especially from the USA and the UK. This work began in the College of Education at UNN with a "Seminar in Education" conducted by John Blake of the University of Keele and Edward Carlin of Michigan State University in February 1961 (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1992; University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012). The Seminar introduced a "revolutionary philosophy in Education [that] envisaged the exposure of humanities and social sciences students to natural sciences and vice versa. But all the students were to take the English Language courses for better communication" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1992, p. 3). From this combined American and British effort "the pattern of the General Studies Programme was set" (p. 4). In December of that same year, the "University of Nigeria Law, 1961," enacted by the legislature of the Eastern Region of Nigeria, listed the College of General Studies among the academic units to be established at UNN (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1992; University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1970).

The College began offering its courses in the 1961/62 academic year under the name "The John Russwarm College of General Studies" in honor of the first African American graduate of an American institution of higher education (Otagburuagu, 2014; Okwor, 2010).

The new College of General Studies began its first year with a curriculum comprised of five division—"Language and Literature, Language and Society, Social Science, Natural Science and Humanities" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012, p. 7)—but these were soon reduced to the four "Units," or departments, that remain to this day: the Use of English, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Humanities (see Table 5 in APPENDIX J). While the curriculum of GS continued to reflect the structure of Blake and Carlin's Seminar—that is, Use of English was compulsory for all undergraduates while students enrolled in two of the other three Units based on their area of specialization, or major—Axinn contended that those tasked with its development did not wish to simply "transplant" an American model of liberal education in Nigeria (Ezeocha, 1977, p. 306). Instead, they strove to "take the best from the British system of higher education, the best from the American system, the best from other Europeans, leave the worst back there at home and bring to Nigeria only those portions which would fit uniquely Nigeria's needs and then mix it all together with their own… indigenous way and develop something uniquely appropriate to Nigeria" (Axinn quoted in Ezeocha, 1977, p. 141). Throughout the 1960s, the emphasis on these "indigenous ways," what I termed *Nigerianization* in Chapter 1, continued to expand across the GSP (Pettit, 1969).

Still, General Studies, modeled as it was on American liberal education, was met in its early years with immense derision and skepticism by both students and Nigerian academic staff members. Many of these, especially those trained under the long-dominant British educational system, viewed American higher education as inherently inferior and deemed general education

to be unworthy of university teaching (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012; Ezeocha, 1977; Fafunwa, 1984). Compounding this ill-will was the College's practice during this period of recruiting lecturers from other Faculties to teach its courses, rather than hiring its own academic staff, which initially left the GSP with few internal advocates (Otagburuagu, 2004). In large part as a result of these tensions surrounding GS, the College was downgraded to the "Division of General Studies" in 1964, losing much of its autonomy and reputational standing in the University (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012). Around this same time however, the first students graduated from UNN that had received instruction in GS. Much to the surprise of the curriculum's critics these graduates brought GS an "unexpected boost. The University graduates along with graduates of other Nigerian universities… took the civil service examinations held by the Nigerian government. The University of Nigeria placed eleven in the top fifteen. The top student was from the University of Nigeria" (Pettit, 1969, p. 1-12). Carlin Edwards, one of the GS curriculum's original designers, noted that "in particular, the general studies programs seemed to have [had] a considerable impact upon the ability of students from the University of Nigeria to take the competitive Civil Service examination," because the examination evaluated knowledge from various disciplines (Ezeocha, 1977, p. 167). The general knowledge nature of the examination left more specialized graduates, such as those from the University of Ibadan, at a disadvantage relative to their UNN counterparts who had the benefit of a more holistic general education. This success, and subsequent successes in the years that followed, quieted much of the criticism of GS and allowed the curriculum to firmly establish itself at UNN.

The successes of GS alumni from UNN not only raised the curriculum's profile in Nsukka, but also made it an object of replication across Nigeria's burgeoning higher education sector beginning in the latter half of the 1960s. Babs Fafunwa, one of UNN's early Nigerian

faculty members, attested that "some of us who left Nsukka for the University of Ife [now Obafemi Awolowo University] helped to plant General Studies at that institution in the late 1960's" (Fafunwa, 1984, p. 13). This national trend, emanating from Nsukka, would continue throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as described below, but it was temporarily stalled in 1967 with the outbreak of an unprecedented national conflict—the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1907). The War was precipitated by the secession of the southeastern region of Nigeria, where UNN is located, by Igbo (the southeast's dominant ethnic and linguistic community) ethno-nationalists who declared themselves the independent Republic of Biafra (Nwaubani, 2020; Kobo, 2020). General Studies lecturers Otagburuagu and Oloidi (2017) explain that the Civil War,

> made all expatriates [American and European] staff leave the University and the country. It is important to note here that the same civil war led to the temporary closure of the University until 1970 when the war ended. This was a turning point in the history of General Studies because after 1967, no other expatriate staff occupied the position of Dean in General Studies either because the expatriates were gone with the civil war or the indigenization policy became the order of the day. (p. 16)

The War was not just a turning point for GS at UNN, denoting the termination of the international partnerships that had characterized the University's first seven years, but also marked the end of the "First Republic" of Nigeria, the beginning of decades of intermittent military regimes and coups, and foreshadowed the sporadic intercommunal violence that continues to plague Nigeria to this day (Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, n.d.). Each of these national repercussions would find itself reflected in the GS courses, as well as the Nigerian government's reactions to the curriculum, in the decades that followed.

**Curricular, Institutional, and National Development: The 1970s and 80s**

The years following the Civil War were a period of change for the GS curriculum, UNN as an institution, and Nigeria as a nation. The first such change occurred almost immediately, with the Division of General Studies experiencing the first of a series of credit-load reductions, from an average of twelve credits per course to six, relative to students' academic commitments in their areas of specialization in the University (Okafor, 2012; see Table 5 in APPENDIX J). This change however, though seeming to bring UNN's institutional commitment to general education into doubt, was at odds with the expansion of GS to other areas of Nigeria's higher education system that was already under way. For instance, prior to the Civil War UNN had opened a branch campus in the regional capital of Enugu and in 1973 another campus was opened in the city of Calabar. Four years later in 1977, the Calabar campus became the newest autonomous university in Nigeria—the University of Calabar (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1981a). The University of Calabar thus represented yet another postcolonial university, along with the University of Ife as described by Fafunwa (1984), that would require its students to undertake Nsukka-style general education as part of their studies.

Meanwhile, changes were taking place in the national government that would have far-reaching effects on GS in Nsukka and Nigeria as a whole. The National Universities Commission (NUC), established in 1962 as an advisory agency, became a statutory body with the power to regulate and accredit tertiary institutions in Nigeria in 1974 (NUC, n.d.). Later in the decade, in 1978, the federal government, concerned with the project of "nation building" and national integration in post-colonial and post-war Nigeria, made its first venture into the general education space by sending out a "clarion call… to all the Universities in the country for 'a compulsory course on National Awareness in the University curriculum'" (University of Nigeria

Nsukka, 1992, p. 5). This course was intended to combat the "widespread ignorance among Nigerian groups about each other and about themselves… by instituting a compulsory [course on the] culture and history of our various peoples. The award of degrees [would] be made conditional upon the passing of the paper in this course" (p. 5). This mandate resonated with UNN's already long-standing and strong commitment to national development and uplift, going back to Azikiwe's original vision for the University. At UNN, the government's call was instituted in the GS curriculum with a heightened emphasis on national development—culturally, civically, and economically—particularly in the Social Sciences and Humanities courses beginning in the 1970s (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1978; University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012; see Table 5 in APPENDIX J). These same years witnessed a reinvigoration of the Division of General Studies' teaching staff, as in the late 1970s the practice of recruiting instructors from other Faculties was cast off in favor of internal hiring and development of core academic staff whose curricular responsibilities would be, first and foremost, to the GSP (Otagburuagu, 2004).

The 1980s saw GS achieve even greater heights and prominence in Nigerian higher education. At the beginning of the decade, a prescribed course of study, based on the specialized colonial model of education and differentiated by students' majors, remained the most common type of postsecondary curriculum. Nonetheless, a more liberal philosophy of higher education began to gain currency in Nigerian universities. Osunde (1985), as described in Chapter 2, illustrated how many tertiary institutions began augmenting their single-discipline programs of study with a broader range of required courses at the departmental level, though these compulsory courses were often not university-wide. Still, an institution-level common core of general education courses, as first introduced at the UNN, did spread to a few additional universities by the mid-1980s. This momentum led in 1984 to the formation of the "Nigerian

Association of General Studies," a professional non-governmental organization that both advocated for GS in the Nation's universities and partnered with the Nigerian government to leverage general education toward "combating the ills of the society" (Oluikpe, 1987, p. i). Two years later in 1986 even the University of Ibadan, Nigeria's venerable bastion of specialized learning, finally introduced GS into its curriculum after holding out for more than a quarter century by founding the Centre for General Studies, originally the General Studies Programme (Nwosu, 2017a; University of Ibadan, 2018b).

By the end of the decade, the inertia of GS across Nigeria was irresistible and the NUC, on behalf of the federal government, could not help but take formal notice. In 1989, the NUC issued the first "Minimum Academic Standards" (MAS), today called the "Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards" (BMAS), which outlined the curricular content and standards required of all accredited universities in the country (Ogbeide, 2018, p. 27). Introduced among these minimum standards was a national core general education curriculum, the "General Studies Programme (GSP)" (p. 27). In addition to the compulsory course on "national awareness" called for a decade earlier, the GSP was to be comprised of humanities, social science, and natural science courses modeled on those first offered by UNN. It was now clear—General Studies had come of age in Nigeria.

**The Curriculum of My Participants: 1990s to the Present**

Elucidating this final period in the story of General Studies, spanning the most recent three decades, represents both a central concern of my research as well as an area where this project can make a significant contribution to the literature. Not only is this the era that can most fully be accounted for by the lived experiences, and thus the sensemaking and agency, of the majority of my faculty research participants (described in Chapter 5), but it is also arguably the

least well documented as many of the available secondary sources have heretofore described earlier iterations of the GS curriculum at UNN and across Nigeria (Ezeocha, 1977; Osunde, 1985; Oulikpe, 1984, 1987; Pettit, 1969; etc.).

The 1990s witnessed the GSP continuing to both adjust to the institutional dictates of UNN and to carve out its own place of distinction in the University. At the beginning of the decade, the courses in each of the GS Units were split into two 2-credit courses as the University shifted to the semester system. For example, "the original Social Sciences course [became] Social Sciences I (GS 103) offered in the first semester and Social Sciences II (GSP 104) offered in the second semester" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012, p. 28; see Table 5 in APPENDIX J). Throughout the 1990s, the policy and practice of recruiting core GS faculty continued unabated, with the "greatest staff recruitment for General Studies teaching [taking] place between 1993/1994 and 1996/98… [so that] today, only the Dean [then called the "Director"] of the School is not a core staff member" (Otagburuagu, 2004, p. 48). "Directors and Deans of General Studies [were and continue to be] appointed by the [UNN] Vice Chancellors of their time. The criteria or reasons for the appointments are only known to the Vice Chancellors who appoint them" (Nwosu, 2017a, p. 14).

The start of the new millennium was a significant turning point both for GS at UNN and for Nigeria as a nation. In 1999, following the death of the military head-of-state the previous year, a new national constitution was adopted and a peaceful transition to a democratically elected civilian government was accomplished (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). This shift marked the beginning of Nigeria's "Fourth Republic" in forty years (Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, n.d.) as well as the end of intermittent military rule, but it did not put an end to the governmental corruption, intergroup violence, and inequitable socio-economic

development that still afflicts the Nation (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018), and informs the content of the GS courses today. That same year in Nsukka, the Division of General Studies at UNN, which had been downgraded and lost much of its autonomy in 1964, re-"metamorphosed" into a full-fledged School—today's School of General Studies—and its Director was designated a Dean (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012, p. 8). This transition, along with the now mostly complete shift to core GS teaching staff, put the GSP on more even footing with the University's other Faculties for the first time since the UNN's formative years.

In the first decade of the 2000s, the Federal Government, through its accreditation arm the NUC, once again inserted itself into the curricular workings of the GS program throughout Nigeria. In 2007, the Minimum Academic Standards (MAS), which had first mandated GS in 1989, had been re-designated the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS). These new requirements "called for adjustments in the General Studies Programme that necessitated a 'retuning' of the courses to enable students be better equipped for societal and functional relevance" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012, p. 22). The ensuing changes would be most notable in the Social Sciences, Humanities, and the Use of English Units at UNN. Concerning the social sciences, the NUC collaborated with the University for Peace, an affiliate of the United Nations (UNs) based in Costa Rica, to develop a new national curriculum on "Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS)" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012). In response to Nigeria's perpetual state of intergroup conflict, the PCS curriculum was intended to focus on "developing a culture of peace [in opposition to] communal/indigenous conflicts, terrorism, etc., as well as other related issues in the African and Nigerian context" (Okwor, 2010, p. 72). In 2008, "in compliance with the [NUC] directives, two new [GS] courses for undergraduates were added [at UNN]. Those were Basic Concepts and Theories of Peace and Conflict (GSP 201) and Issues in Peace and Conflict

Resolution Studies (GSP 202)," replacing the former Social Sciences I (G.S. 103) and Social Sciences II (G.S. 104) (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012, p. 28). However, the NUC still allowed substantial latitude for individual universities to shape their own curricula. Therefore, by 2012 UNN's SGS exercised its prerogative to re-institute Social Sciences I (now simply called "The Social Sciences (G.S. 201)") as a requirement for Humanities and Natural Sciences majors while keeping "Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies (G.S. 202)" as a compulsory course for all undergraduate students (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012). This remains the curricular structure of the Social Sciences Unit to this day (see Table 5 in APPENDIX J).

Two new courses were also instituted in the Humanities Unit—"Logic, Philosophy and Human Existence (G.S. 207)" and "Nigerian Peoples and Cultures (G.S. 208)"—replacing the former Humanities I and II which had focused on "the crises of development in the developing world, with Nigeria as a case study" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012, p. 22; see Table 5 in APPENDIX J). The introduction of the course on Logic and Philosophy demonstrated explicitly economic goals on the part of the NUC, as the capacities it was intended to instill in students—"critical and analytical skills"—were those deemed to be in highest "demand by employers of labour" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2019, p. 35). The course on Nigerian Peoples and Cultures on the other hand was the natural descendant of the course on "National Awareness" called for by the Federal Government in 1978 and, like PCS in the Social Sciences, was meant to combat national ills stemming from the "widespread ignorance among Nigerian groups about each other" (University of Nigeria Nsukka,1992, p. 5). It was however re-tuned for the twenty-first century to highlight the "nature and dynamic structure of cultures in a rapidly changing society like Nigeria" in the new millennium (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2019, p. 35). Meanwhile in the Use of English Unit, the two longstanding required courses—G.S. 101 and

102—were augmented by a new course on "Use of Library and Basic Research Skills (G.S. 111)" that would be taught by staff of the campus' Nnamdi Azikiwe Library under the banner of GS (Nwosu & Asogwa, 2015; see Table 5 in APPENDIX J). Students had been receiving instruction on library resources in the Use of English courses since the 1970s (Nwosu, 2017a), but the heightened emphasis on these competencies, especially concerning information and ICT literacy in an ever more interconnected world, in the NUC's new BMAS spurred UNN to launch a wholly new course (National Universities Commission, 2007).

While not as explicitly driven by the NUC's revised requirements, it is important to note that the Natural Sciences Unit's courses also saw ongoing adjustments to their contents in the 2000s. These reflected both concerns especially salient in the context of Africa and Nigeria, such as lectures on HIV/AIDS which first appeared in 1999 (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1999) before becoming a mainstay in of Natural Sciences Unit in 2004 (Otagburuagu, 2004), and those of a more global nature, like coverage of climate change and its implications (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012). Furthermore, the SGS and its leaders continue to innovate with their curriculum in ways that distinguish UNN from its fellow Nigerian universities. For instance, former SGS Dean (2015-17), "Professor Apollonia Nwosu expanded the curriculum of the Humanities Unit to include Igbo language studies" as a reflection of UNN's cultural and linguistic situatedness in southeastern Nigeria (Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017, p. 47).

## Conclusion

Since UNN's inaugural class of approximately two-hundred-and-fifty young men and women arrived on campus in 1960 (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1992), the university has grown apace. Today, UNN enrolls more than thirty-six-thousand students annually (Times Higher Education, 2019) and the SGS serves these learners with an academic staff of more than

one-hundred faculty members (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2019). Concurrently, the GS curriculum itself has come far in its efforts to reflect what Okafor (2012) calls "the peculiar need[s] of the country" over the last more than half a century (p. 369). What began as a collaborative innovation shared among Nigerian, American and European educators has largely morphed into a national project steered by Nigerians themselves even as transnational partners, such the UN's University for Peace (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012), have continued to play a role. Indeed, all of the most recent changes to the GS curriculum—whether driven by the Federal Government (at times in collaboration with international organizations), UNN as an institution, or the SGS's own leaders—must be understood in the context of the complex, pluralistic, post-colonial, and still-developing nation that is contemporary Nigeria. UNN, and its GS curriculum, operates in the context of nascent and contested democratic institutions, a shifting economy in need of reform, and ongoing violence from "longstanding ethnic and religious tensions" compounded by the rise of terrorist organizations like Boko Haram (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). Nonetheless, the University persists in striving to become more a more "globally competitive" institution viewed as "world class" on the international stage (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2019, p. 13). All of these interlocking and competing forces continue influence the GS curriculum as it is experienced by faculty at UNN, as I analyze in the following chapter on the findings of my research.

# CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

With my "case"—the GS curriculum at UNN—now comprehensively historicized and contextualized, this chapter deals with the specific findings of my research that address the three research questions that guided this study (see "Statement of the Problem" section). As noted in Chapter 1, in the HE literature of sub-Saharan African the concept of 'curriculum' remains vague and variable (LeGrange, 2016; Mngomezulu & Hadebe, 2018) and the perspectives of African faculty members have heretofore been underattended to. Furthermore, though my study is concerned with both the program-level curriculum of the SGS overall at UNN and with the course-level curricula of the SGS's various Units which faculty are tasked with delivering to students, little has been written about the distinctions between program- and course-level curricula at African universities. American faculty however report attributing more weight to external forces in program-level curriculum planning while acknowledging greater personal agency at the course-level (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Stark et al., 1997).

Congruently, in our conversations my Nigerian participants recounted less agency among faculty members at the program-level. That said, they had much to share regarding their understanding of the glonacal forces I identified from the analysis of primary and secondary textual sources and were essential in "member checking" these findings to ensure that my forces aligned with faculty members' perceptions—that is, sensemaking—of the GSP. Conversely, explicating how this sensemaking actually feeds into agency—that is, how faculty use their understanding of the forces that influence the curriculum to take action as instructors—became a major focus of my conversations with faculty regarding the course-level curriculum in their own classes and Units. Thus, given the fact that African curricula and knowledges do not exist in a vacuum (Heleta, 2016; LeGrange, 2016), my findings represent an important step toward

bridging the American and African literatures on curricular work, and offer fresh insights on curricular transformation and adaptation in Nigeria, Africa, and underexamined contexts in the non-Western world and "Global South" overall (Shahjahan & Kezar, 2013).

Therefore, in this chapter I have three aims. First, I focus on the program-level curriculum to answer this study's first research question—*What are the forces that influenced the initial development of and ongoing adjustments to the GS curriculum at UNN*?—with reference to Chapter 4's historical case study and the primary and secondary texts that informed it. Second, I examine GS faculty members' sensemaking of these glonacal forces and engage with them to "member check" my preliminary findings. Third, I analyze how faculty in UNN's SGS report making sense of and taking agency within their own specific GS Units and courses—that is, the course-level curriculum—to answer research questions two and three. These latter questions however cannot be answered merely by revisiting what has been laid down in past texts. These questions required co-exploring the curriculum with the faculty themselves through qualitative interviews, both on-site at UNN in 2019 and remotely from the USA in 2020. The findings from these interviews form the basis of the second and third sections of this chapter.

## Glonacal Forces at the Program-Level

### Revisiting Theory: Forces

From the analysis of my primary and secondary textual sources, along with the foregoing history in Chapter 4, we can begin to tease out the forces that have influenced, and continue to impact, the University of Nigeria Nsukka's (UNN) General Studies (GS) curriculum at the programmatic level over the past six decades. In line with my theoretical framework (Chapter 1) I have organized the forces that follow into the three levels of the Glonacal Perspective—global, national, and local (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). Before proceeding to these program-level

findings however, it is necessary to revisit my conceptualization of *forces* and how they act upon the General Studies Programme (GSP) and its faculty. As noted in Chapter 1, forces, as I deploy the term, come in two varieties. First, forces include Marginson and Rhoades' (2002) second definition of "*agencies*"—namely, entities or organizations that operate and exert influence at the global, national, or local levels (p. 289)—and, second, the more nebulous category of "*influences*," more similar to "logics" (Friedland & Alford, 1991) and "ideoscapes" (Appadurai, 1996). Thus, I have organized the forces that I identified at each of the glonacal levels into two categories—(1) the actions and discourses of self-contained 'agencies' and (2) the freely flowing 'influences' of untethered trends, dynamics, and ideas.

**Global Forces**

The following forces flow predominantly from the Global spatial dimension, as outlined in my theoretical framework, though there is oftentimes overlap with the other levels of glonacality as will be elucidated. Such forces are commonly the result of either explicit interactions on the part of UNN and/or its stakeholders with global, typically 'Western,' organizations and individuals—that is 'agencies'—or due to the 'influences' of foreign and/or de-territorialized ideas and dynamics on UNN's model of education. I begin by identifying the two most prevalent 'influences'—namely colonialism and globalization—before discussing the impacts of foreign and transnational 'agencies' overtime.

*Global influence: colonialism*. The earliest, and arguably most formative, documented global influence on the GS curriculum was British colonial rule in the 19$^{th}$ and early 20$^{th}$ centuries over what was to become the country of Nigeria. This century-long period of foreign subjugation resulted not only in the formation of a large, complex, and multi-ethnic Nigerian nation-state, but also in the forced introduction of a highly specialized form of tertiary education

in the pre-independence period (Lilford, 2012, p. 202; Osunde, 1985, p. 49). This over-specialization was most evident at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria's only pre-independence institution of higher education, controlled and patterned as it was after the University of London (Pettit, 1969, p. ii; University of Ibadan, 2018a). Early nationalist leaders, most notably UNN's principle founder Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, reacted negatively to this specialized and British-centric model of education (Ezeocha, 1977), viewing it as one of the colonizers' most corrosive forms of coercive control over the Nigerian people (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1992, p. 1).

It was this palpable dissatisfaction with the colonial experience, and its expression in the post-secondary curriculum at the University of Ibadan, that provided the original rationale among UNN's founders for partnering with Americans to experiment with the then-foreign model of liberal education, culminating in the GS curriculum, as well as ongoing efforts to decolonize the University's curricula (University of Nigeria Nsukka,1992; Nwosu, 2017a). Since independence, the deleterious legacies of colonialism can still be observed in the GS curriculum's continued attention to the colonial experience as well as its emphasis on post-colonial national development (more on this in the upcoming section on "National Forces"), particularly in the Social Sciences and Humanities Units as evidenced in numerous editions of the UNN Calendars and SGS Handbooks (ex. University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1978; University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2019).

*Global influence: globalization.* In post-independence Nigeria, globalization has, for better or for worse, had an appreciable and enduring impact on both higher education curricula, like GS, and on Nigerian society overall. Globalization, as described in Chapter 1, includes global trends and dynamics, often beyond the control of HEIs but to which they are compelled to respond nonetheless. These influences are driven by heightened economic, political, cultural, and

technological interconnectedness at the global spatial dimension (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). In 2019, SGS Dean Professor Uchenna Nzewi comprehensively articulated how globalization is manifested in GS at UNN: "The knowledge we offer is… designed to keep you… prepared for the… highly competitive, mutually inter-dependent, consistently globalizing, highly ICT-driven, and dynamic world that we live in" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2019, p. 12). Indeed, though the influences of globalization derive from the global level of my theoretical framework, their outcomes—that is, *internationalization* decisions and actions (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009)—in higher education contexts are manifested in the changes and adjustments made by institutional actors and organizations at the local level, such as UNN or its SGS, as well as those of governmental entities and outside organizations, such as the NUC in Nigeria.

Examples of internationalization in the GS curriculum include ever greater coverage of "global human problems" (Ugwu, Ngwu, and Ajah, 2019, p. i), such as global climate change in the Natural Sciences Unit (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012). Greater technological connectivity, along with the desire for competitiveness in the global higher education space, also drives change, such as the pronounced emphasis on e-learning, digital resources, and online research in the Use of Library course following the NUC's 2007 BMAS (Nwosu & Asogwa, 2015). However, it is important to remember that neither the benefits nor the draw backs of globalization are equitably distributed across the globe. Institutions in developing and post-colonial nations, like UNN, are often more likely to experience globalization as a form of "re-colonization," or neo-colonialism (Deem, Mok & Lucas, 2008, p. 93). In fact, UNN Professor Damian Opata, writing about UNN's GSP, deems globalization to be little more than a "nickname" for a "web of global imperialism" that keeps the local and indigenous knowledge of

African societies in a subordinate position relative to purportedly global knowledge flowing from developed Western nations (Opata, 2017, p. 19).

*Global agencies: transnational mobility and partnerships.* From their earliest conception, both UNN and its GS curriculum have been influenced by the transnational mobility of individuals, such as Dr. Azikiwe, and partnerships with foreign organizations, such as MSU. Dr. Azikiwe's exposure to American universities and their liberal model of learning as a foreign student in the early 20th century provided him with the necessary framework to exercise his own agency, first as the Premier of the Eastern Region and later as UNN's first Chancellor and Nigeria's first Head-of-State, to envision and realize a Nigerian land grant university with a fully inclusive general education program (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012; Poloma & Szelenyi, 2019). The individual mobility of Azikiwe spawned numerous partnerships with foreign organizations, including MSU, the British IUC, and USAid, and the subsequent mobility of international advisors and staff that would shape UNN and the GSP in the 1960s (Ezeocha, 1977; Pettit, 1969).

While the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967 forced an end to these early partnerships and the departure of Western advisors (Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017), collaborations with foreign organizations have continued to influence the GSP at UNN, albeit more irregularly. Such collaborations are epitomized by the NUC's (see the section on "National Forces") work with the UN's University for Peace to adapt the field of Peace and Conflict Studies—itself originating in Western, predominantly American, 20th century scholarship (Udegbunam & Udoudom, 2017)—into a uniquely Nigerian curriculum located in the Social Sciences Unit at UNN (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012). Furthermore, UNN's affiliation with transnational groups, such as the Alliance for African Partnership introduced in Chapter 3 (Alliance for

African Partnership, n.d.), continues to provide foreigners, such as this author, the mobility to visit Nsukka and learn about and from the GS curriculum and its actors.

**National Forces**

The following section describes those forces that originate at the National level, that is the Nigerian level, of my theoretical framework. Such forces include both ideas and practices, namely 'influences' like the principles of development and Nigerianization, and organizational 'agencies,' such as the Nigerian government and especially the NUC, that have impacted the evolution of GS at UNN. While these forces are typically supra-organizational, they are manifested specifically in the curriculum at UNN. For instance, the local, or institutional, expression of National Forces can be seen in the thematic emphasis on "development" in the Humanities and Social Sciences Units of the 1970s and 1980s (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1978; see Table 5 in APPENDIX J). I begin by describing two national 'influences' on the GSP—specifically development and Nigerianization—and then discuss the impacts of national 'agencies' on the curriculum.

*National influence: development.* National development is arguably the most pervasive national influence in the GS curriculum at UNN overtime, surfacing in various forms in all Units of the programme. As a relatively young nation that was chronically underdeveloped during the colonial period, Nigeria and its universities have been in a state of perpetual preoccupation with development for decades. The GS curriculum expresses two varieties of developmental concerns in its courses—(1) civic development, dealing with issues of democratization and national cohesion, and (2) economic development, related to diversifying the Nation's economy and preparing graduates for the world of work. Such concerns with national development are evident as early as UNN's formative years in the 1960s when the University's guiding philosophy and

mission were articulated as "the spirit of 'nation building'" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1961, p. 9). Over the following decades, development morphed from a nebulous philosophy at the University level to an explicit learning objective in the GSP when "to avoid the pitfall of presenting the student with a 'mish-mash' of topics from… numerous disciplines… [a] 'theme' approach [was] adopted" in the 1970s and 80s (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1978, p. 139). During these years, the themes of "Social Development" and "African Cultural Development" framed the courses in the Social Sciences and Humanities respectively (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1978; see Table 5 in APPENDIX J). The curricular fixation with development in the SGS continued well into the new millennium. For example, until its courses were redesigned in response the NUC's 2007 BMAS requirements, the Humanities Unit's courses "focused on the crises of development in the developing world, with Nigeria as a case study" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012, p. 22).

Today, GS courses at UNN are not only concerned with engendering a spirit of 'nation building' in students, but also with combatting the various societal ills that continue to militate against equitable development in contemporary Nigeria. Such militating factors include, but are not limited to, intergroup (i.e. ethic/religious) violence, terrorism, poverty, government corruption, an undiversified oil-based economy, and the legacies of military rule (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). For example, "Nigerian Peoples and Cultures (GSP 208)" was designed to combat national disunity by producing "graduates with broad knowledge of the Nigerian peoples with a view to inculcating in them a sense of patriotism, morality and intellectuality and vision to face the larger society" (Agbo & Uzuegbu, 2017, p. 79). Similarly, Peace and Conflict Studies (GSP 202) "focuses on developing a culture of peace" in opposition

to “communal/indigenous conflicts, terrorism, etc.… in the African and Nigerian context” (Okwor, 2010, p. 72).

*National influence: Nigerianization.* Introduced in Chapter 1, Nigerianization is the “process of making something (more) Nigerian in character” (Oxford English Dictionaries, 2019). Like the influence of development described previously, Nigerianization has been a pervasive force in the GSP at UNN over time. In UNN’s SGS, Nigerianization has taken on two forms—Nigerianization of the staff and Nigerianization of the curriculum. First, there is the replacement of not-native academic staff and personnel with Nigerians throughout the Nation’s universities, driven by a Federal Government policy following national independence (Agbowuro, 1976). At UNN, this process was initially slow since in the 1960s foreigners, especially Americans, held the majority of administrative and teaching positions in GSP (Poloma & Szelenyi, 2019). Throughout the University’s first decade “the Americans strove to recruit Nigerian successors,” but only one of the four GS Units was headed by a Nigerian instructor as of 1967 (Okonkwo, 1986, p. 298). That same year however, the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War forced the realization of the Nigerianization policy as foreign staff were compelled to evacuate Nigeria (Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017). Since the re-opening of UNN in 1970, the predominance of Nigerian-born GS instructors and staff has increased unabated. Indeed, all of the contemporary faculty (N=11) who participated in interviews for this study were Nigerian-born citizens and only three (3) noted being educated overseas, in either the USA or Australia.

Second, as with the staff, the Nigerianization of the GS curriculum at UNN began at the outset of the University’s experiment with liberal education and would continue throughout the years that followed. Lincoln Pettit of MSU reported that from the beginning “the Nigerians demonstrated an enviable capacity to develop an indigenous general education program—one

with strong intellectual bonds to both American and British traditions but as different from either as they are different from each other" (Pettit, 1969, Forward). However, "Nigerianization of course content was… slow" and did not truly accelerate until Nigerian's fully took the helm in the decades following the Civil War (Okonkwo, 1986, p. 298). One of the clearest articulations of the Nigerian character of the GS curriculum—reproduced in every edition of the SGS Undergraduate Handbook between 1992 and 2010—comes from then-Director of the GSP S. N. Nwabara in 1984:

> The philosophy of General Studies programme inheres in the training of the child in the indigenous Nigerian home… There is hardly any subject taught in school that was not learnt in rudimentary form in the home. No child was confined to one area of knowledge... All the ingredients of teaching and learning in the 'primitive' home were categorized into four units of the General Studies Programme – Humanities, Social Science, Natural Science and the Use of English. By that categorization, the subjects learnt in the early formative years in the home were formalized into academic disciplines rooted in the students' cultural milieu (p. 24).

While I have elected to discuss the Nigerianization—that is, the 'nationalization'—of the curriculum under the National level of my theoretical framework, it is important to note that this influence is intimately linked, and at times conflated, with both the continent-wide concept of 'Africanization' and the more local processes of 'indigenization' and 'localization'. For example, these latter, local processes are evident in Professor Apollonia Nwosu's (SGS Dean, 2015-17) expansion of "the curriculum of the Humanities Unit to include Igbo language studies" reflecting UNN's situatedness in southeastern Nigeria specifically (Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017, p. 47).

*National agencies: government and non-governmental organizations.* The Nigerian government, both the regional government of Eastern Nigeria in the late colonial period and the federal government in the national period, carries considerable weight in its dealings with UNN and the GSP. Beginning with the 1955 Law authorizing UNN (Ezeocha, 1977; University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1961) and the 1961 legislation establishing the College of General Studies (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1992), the government has only intensified its involvement with the GSP in the years since. This governmental involvement can first be seen in the 1978 call for a mandatory course on 'National Awareness' in all Nigerian universities which not only instigated changes in UNN's GS curriculum at that time, but can also be seen as a precursor to the course on 'Nigerian Peoples and Culture' in today's Humanities Unit (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1992).

The reach of the Federal Government into the GS curriculum is most evident in the case National Universities Commission (NUC), which became a statutory accreditation agency in 1974 (NUC, n.d.) and mandated the GSP—modelled after UNN's programme—at all Nigerian universities in through its 'Minimum Academic Standards (MAS)' in 1989 (Ogbeide, 2018). Furthermore, the NUC's revised 'Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS)' of 2007 had an enormous impact on the GS courses taught at UNN today, requiring revisions to the Humanities (GS 207 Logic, Philosophy and Human Existence; GS 208 Nigerian Peoples and Cultures), Social Sciences (GS 202 Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies), and Use of English (GS 111 Use of Library and Basic Research Skills) Units' courses (Okwor, 2010; University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012; Nwosu & Asogwa, 2015). Beyond the Nigerian government, UNN's GSP was itself influential in founding several national professional organizations geared toward furthering General Studies in Nigeria, such as the "National Association of General Studies" and

the "Association of General Studies Deans/Directors," over the years (Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017, p. 54-55). While I have identified little evidence that these non-governmental associations had an appreciable impact on the GS curriculum at UNN, their efforts did help to spur the spread of GS to other Nigerian HEIs prior to the NUC's 1989 MAS requirements and have provided extensive secondary sources for this analysis (Oluikpe, 1984, 1987).

**Local Forces**

The forces in this section are most apparent at the Local, or institutional, level of my theoretical framework, namely UNN and its immediate environs. These forces represent both individual and collective 'agencies' that exert control over the GSP, such as UNN's Vice Chancellor and the University Senate, and local and institutional 'influences' that flow between actors and groups in the SGS, at times engendering shared understanding while at other times causing tensions. I begin by discussing the local 'influences' at play in the SGS—both interpersonal politics (tensions) and shared narratives (consensuses)—and then outline the power of institutional 'agencies' to shape the GS curriculum.

*Local influences: interpersonal politics and shared narratives.* Within the GSP and UNN, interpersonal dynamics—both politically charged tensions and shared narratives that inform collective identity—have shaped the SGS's structure and curriculum over time. First, institutional politics, necessitating negotiation and compromise, have characterized both the SGS's relationship with the wider institution and interactions within the School itself since the 1960s. Regarding these early years, George Axinn of MSU noted that,

> the [institutional] leadership [had] certain ideas, others [had] other ideas and [it was] mixed in a dialogue. Certainly Nsukka was characterized, throughout its first seven years, by dialogue and discussion. There were long debates on various issues; the [University]

> Senate used to sometimes meet at three in the afternoon and go until ten or eleven at night debating and discussing issues. (Ezeocha, 1977, p. 124)

Carlin Edwards concurred that during his tenure as Director of GS in the 1960s he had to maintain constant diplomatic contact with various interested parties, from students to the Vice Chancellor's office to other departments and Faculties, across campus to keep the Programme on track (p. 173). Furthermore, multiple of my faculty interviewees at UNN noted politics, disagreements, and tensions within the SGS itself, as well as within their own Units, as key influences on their curricular work, as will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Second, not all aspects of the GSP beget discord or require debate; there are various elements of GS's history at UNN that are widely agreed upon and shape how the Programme views itself and its mission. Such 'shared narratives' have become collective rallying cries and points of consensus in the School and appear not just in primary and secondary textual sources from years past, but remained common refrains in my conversations with contemporary GS faculty in this study (detailed in the second half of this chapter). These narratives include the benefits of the SGS's status as a full-fledged Faculty at UNN with its own core staff (Otagburuagu, 2004), the role played by the National Civil Service Examination in the 1960s in quieting early criticism of GS (Ezeocha, 1977; Pettit, 1969; University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012), and the growing prominence of ICTs and e-learning in the School (Nwosu & Asogwa, 2015; Ugwu & Ngwu, 2017). An especially common—and, for this study, significant—narrative is that of UNN's role as the progenitor of GS in all of Nigeria and Africa. For instance, in her introduction to the 2019 SGS Undergraduate Handbook, previous Dean Uchenna Nzewi contends that, "The story of [GS]… in tertiary institutions in Africa cannot be complete without stating the fact that [UNN]… pioneered the programme in the whole of the African Continent.

Since UNN started the… GSP… countless tertiary institutions in and outside Nigeria have copied the programme" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2019). Thus, it is clear that such shared narratives continue to influence how GS faculty and administrators perceive the curriculum, and their own central place in UNN's academic community, today.

*Local agencies: institutional administration and actors.* Beyond broad areas of debate and consensus in the SGS, there are various offices and individuals—that is, 'agencies'—that by merit of their position in the institutional framework of UNN have exerted considerable influence over the SGS. Prominent among these is the administration of the University, from the Vice Chancellor and the University Senate on down. Features of the GSP controlled by the wider university include appointing the Dean of the SGS (Otagburuagu, 2004; Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017), determining the Programme's status on campus, whether as a 'College,' 'Division,' or 'School' (University of Nigeria Nsukka,1992, 2012), setting the credit load for GS courses (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012; Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017), and, in line the NUC's standards, evaluating the course requirements for GS students. Indeed, so involved is the university administration in the functioning of the SGS that former GS Director S. N. Nwabara (1984) noted the longstanding support of institutional leaders as a major reason for optimism among GS faculty and staff (p. 31).

Outside of the central administrative offices at UNN, there are numerous other stakeholders and actors whose experiences and perceptions have and continue to guide the delivery of the GS curriculum. First, the writings left behind by the Founders of UNN and the "pioneer staff" of the GSP's formative years have remained vital to communal sensemaking of the curriculum, so much so that their works were reproduced in every edition of the SGS Undergraduate Handbook from 2002 through 2010. Additionally, the "Publication Committee"

that produces the SGS Handbooks on a semi-annual basis attempts to capture "the feelings of the [current] management… teaching staff… [and] alumni" of the School that inform the "vision of G.S. in the twenty-first century" (Otagburuagu, 2002, p. 25). Finally, as with alumni, feedback from current GS students has frequently been elicited to adapt and improve the curriculum at UNN (Ogenyi & Ngonebu, 2017; Oluikpe, 1984). Oluikpe (1984) articulated the shared view that determining "the response of the students to the programme, particularly since it is, as it were, a distraction from their various areas of specialization" represents one of the most actionable ways of evaluating the GS courses (p. 9).

## Faculty Sensemaking at the Program-Level

### Revisiting Theory: Sensemaking and Agency

In the first portion of this chapter, I attempted to answer this study's first research question by clarifying the forces that have, and continue to, impact the GS curriculum and contextualizing them within the Glonacal Perspective that guides my research. My second and third research questions, however, move us beyond merely inventorying the imbricated and disjunctive forces which flow to, through, and from the SGS by interrogating how UNN's GS faculty members—as subject-matter experts and "curricular change agents" (Hill, 2019)—understand and engage with the curriculum itself in their own work. These latter two guiding questions bear restating here:

> 2. How do faculty at UNN's School of General Studies (SGS) make sense of the forces that influenced the initial development of and ongoing adjustments to the GS curriculum?
>
> 3. How do GS faculty exercise agency in their curricular work as they negotiate making sense of these forces?

To address these questions, it is necessary to revisit the concepts of sensemaking and agency (that is, the agency that faculty members *have*) as I employ them in this study. *Sensemaking*, both individual and collective, is the reflective process of meaning construction through which faculty "make sense" of and understand events, outcomes, and influences (i.e., forces) from the vantage of their own social and cultural context(s) and day-to-day work (Hill, 2019). The *agency* of faculty, as opposed to "agencies" such as the NUC or UNN's administration, is their ability, individually and collectively, to "take action," that is to *exercise* agency, in their curricular work (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). These two concepts are interconnected in my theoretical framework since sensemaking informs action and any action taken informs subsequent sensemaking.

In the following sections, I do two things. First, I explore faculty sensemaking at the program-level and allow my Nigerian interviewees to "member check" and speak to the salience of the findings I have offered thus far. Second, I analyze the sensemaking and agency that my interviewees described at the Unit- and course-levels to investigate how global-national-local tensions and nuances inform routine curricular work in an African liberal education program.

**Faculty Perspectives on Program-Level Curriculum**

In this section, I broadly synthesize my findings about faculty perceptions and understanding (that is, sensemaking) surrounding the GS curriculum, and the forces that underly it, across Units and disciplines in the SGS. This is not to imply that distinctions between Units did not emerge—they did and will be addressed the following section on faculty sensemaking and agency at the course-level. I begin by elucidating those forces that were of particular significance to my faculty participants—National and Local Forces—before moving on to a discussion of program-level Global findings.

*Sensemaking of the national and the local*. First, at the program-level, that is from the perspective UNN's SGS as a whole (and the national GSP modelled after it), a loose consensus emerged across faculty and Units regarding how the GS curriculum has changed and adapted since its inception. Like Stark and colleagues' (1997) American faculty who reported mostly irregular or intermittent program-level curriculum change due to external "shifts or innovations" (p. 110), all of the Nigeria faculty I spoke with in 2019 sensed program-level change as occurring on an infrequent and as-needed basis in response to trends and demands at the local, national, or global levels. If this is the case though, which of these spatial dimensions was most salient to faculty perceptions of the GS curriculum? Well, my faculty interviewees repeatedly highlighted the centrality of National Forces (see page 93), especially the authority exercised over the curriculum by the federal government through the NUC, in driving adjustments to the GSP. Bringing a historical perspective to our conversations, faculty from both the Social Sciences and Humanities Units referred to specific instances of governmental intervention that I described in Chapter 4:

> At a time [in] 1978 [the] federal government… having realized the importance of General Studies Program, decided to establish it, to make sure it is encouraged in all the universities in the country… every university should provide a course [on] national awareness. (Dyke, August 19, 2019)

> In 1980s… The federal government saw the need to copy what the University of Nigeria was doing… they set up a committee to study what the University of Nigeria was doing in terms of General Studies education. The federal government did that… So all the other universities in Nigeria were now directed by the… ministry of education to implement… [the] General Studies Program. (JB, August 19, 2019)

The authority of the NUC to delimit the GS curriculum continues today, and numerous faculty members referenced the more recent 2007 BMAS requirements as shaping both the courses they teach along with their own perceptions of them. Some faculty contend that the government's 21st century standards ushered in "an improved version" of GS (JB, August 19, 2019) while other argue that they "caused a lot of confusion... arguments [and] criticisms" at UNN (Dyke, August 19, 2019). Regardless of their individual value judgements, an acknowledgement of the NUC's preeminence in curricular affairs was near universal among my interviewees. Edu, of Use of English, articulated the shared understanding that "The NUC has to approve [the curriculum]…You don't just change the content of a course without reference to the NUC" (August 19, 2019).

All of this is not to say, however, that the faculty did not perceive individual universities, such as UNN, as also maintaining some latitude to define and differentiate their GS programs at the Local level. For instance, Jacob, of the Use of English Unit, explained how at his alma mater (another Nigerian public university) "their GS is not as sophisticated as our own… it [isn't] as elaborate as what we have here [at UNN]" (August 21, 2019). My interviewees reported that these inter-university distinctions, driven by the administrations and actors of local and regional HEIs, are at times in opposition to the federal government's dictates. At UNN, JB interpreted the University's initially halfhearted response to the 2007 BMAS requirements as being a result of the SGS-wide shared narrative that UNN is the "founding father," and thus rightful interpreter, of what a Nigerian general education should entail:

> [The NUC] implemented the national General Studies curriculum. Meanwhile, UNN didn't implement that [at first]… because we felt that we were the founders, we were not in a hurry to join them… [UNN] refused to implement [the NUC's curriculum]… It

> might have to do with the fact that we felt we were the founding fathers of General Studies in Africa. So who would come and teach us about General Studies? (August 19, 2019)

Still, even UNN did eventually yield to the NUC's standards and many faculty members have since come to perceive the post-2007 curriculum as an improvement.

A major reason for the (largely) positive view held by interviewees regarding the national curriculum standards for GS is the belief that the NUC's requirements are inclusive of two other forces of high salience for faculty—development and Nigerianization—both of which came up again and again, albeit in various forms, in our conversations. Engendering broad-based national development, and addressing the events, legacies and inequities which militate against it in contemporary Nigeria, was of central concern for faculty across Units. For instance, Joel of the Humanities noted the need for instructors to address sexual violence, economic depression and poverty, conflicts over resources, and terrorism with their students (August 21, 2019) while Gloria of the Natural Sciences added religious extremism and governmental corruption (September 10, 2020). The chronic lack of basic infrastructure common throughout Nigeria—be it electricity, internet access, or reliable transportation—was also commonly cited by interviews as constraining both their own work and that of their students. I myself felt these same constraints while in Nsukka, and recorded them in my field notes:

> The closure of the [Enugu] airport, coupled with the lack of internet (26+ hours and counting) and a power outage at the Lodge [where I'm staying] about an hour ago, really reinforces the difficulties of working in Nigeria… [a researcher here] has to work extra hard in [his/her] scholarly career in order to overcome the lack of… technological infrastructure that Western academics take for granted. More and more I'm beginning to

> understand the preoccupation with 'the crisis of development' that runs through some of the past iterations of the GS courses at UNN (August 18, 2019).

Many of the faculty were quick to observe that the courses added after the 2007 BMAS maintain this same 'preoccupation' with what Joel called "contemporary issues that are bedeviling our society" (August 21, 2019). Though the NUC's standards in this domain figure most prominently in the Humanities and Social Sciences Units, faculty from the other disciplines, namely Use of English and Natural Sciences, also stressed ongoing attention to issues of development (Edu, August 19, 2019; Gloria, September 10, 2020).

Similarly, attending to Nigeria-specific content in the GS courses, indicative of Nigerianization, was also top-of-mind for faculty. Speaking about the mission of the SGS broadly, Dyke of the Social Sciences argued that "we have to look at our culture first… and most of the things we're doing, we are drawing our knowledge from Nigeria" (August 19, 2019). Gloria of the Natural Sciences agreed, remarking that, to the extent possible, the GS courses strive to "incorporate topics on past history of Nigeria as well as events in the contemporary Nigeria" (September 10, 2020). As with issues of national development, my participants attributed much of this contemporary focus on Nigeria to the dictates and logics flowing from the NUC. Ben of the Use of English Unit offered his interpretation of the federal government's intentions as follows: "What the government is doing is to introduce into the General Studies Program courses that will instill in the students the spirit… of being a good Nigerian" (August 15, 2019).

The faculty members' emphasis on the clout of the national curriculum standards though, risks erroneously implying that that Nigerianization is purely synonymous with 'nationalization.' In actuality, numerous participants underscored how the force of Nigerianization is imbricated

with parallel influences at the local and continent-wide spatial levels, namely localization and Africanization (see discussion of Nigerianization on page 96). Speaking of his own background, Use of English instructor Jacob articulated the intersection of the local and national in his sensemaking, "I'm a Nigerian. This environment is the environment of my birth. I'm a Nigerian and I think that's the background that you may need… I'm an Igbo, I'm of Igbo origin. My ethnic group is Igbo and this university is in Igbo lands" (August 21, 2019). In the curriculum, such localization—embedded within the bounds of the national GSP—can be observed in the language(s) taught in the Humanities courses throughout Nigeria. While Igbo is taught at UNN, "those universities in the North will incorporate Hausa language, those of them in the West will incorporate Yoruba language" (Joel, August 13, 2020). Correspondingly regarding Africanization, all of the interviewees from the Natural Sciences Unit noted that in addition to contesting "old wives tales or myths" surrounding science in Nigeria, it was their responsibility to inform their students about issues of particular consequence across the whole of Africa, such as endemic diseases like sickle cell anemia and HIV (Gloria, Mary, and KK, August 21, 2019). Thus, the influence of Nigerianization was understood by faculty as taking into account both Nigeria's own context within sub-Saharan Africa as well as the context of the specific institutions where it is applied, such as UNN's domicile in Igbo-land.

*Sensemaking of the global.* If, then, the faculty I spoke to emphasized National Forces, appended and tailored by Local (or institutional) Forces, as being particularly salient to their understanding of the GS curriculum, what of those forces flowing from the Global spatial dimension? Well, in my conversations with faculty the forces of colonialism and transnational mobility and partnerships, while less commonly alluded to in 'making sense' of the contemporary curriculum, did feature prominently in the shared narratives—those 'collective

rallying cries and points of consensus' across the SGS (see page 99)—upon which my participants relied to understand their place in both UNN and Nigerian HE overall. In this section, I begin with a discussion of the historical narratives in which colonialism and transnational mobility and partnerships continue to find expression before addressing how faculty members perceive the impact that the force of globalization has on the curriculum.

To begin with, numerous interviewees referred back to the specialization-centric model of education that prevailed during the colonial period as their starting point in narrativizing the GS curriculum.

> Nigeria was formerly a British colony. And Britain imported an educational system into Nigeria. For higher education, it was specialist-oriented program. Right from the first year in the university undergraduate program, you start to specialize. (Ben, August 15, 2019)

> Remember by [Independence] we already had the University of Ibadan, University College Ibadan, when this university was founded… which was an affiliate of the University of London. So [UNN] was actually the first full-fledged university in Nigeria. The other one, University of Ibadan was University College. And their products were single honor products… Once you read mathematics, you read mathematics from first year to final year and graduate[d]… in mathematics. So before independence, remember most of our leaders had British backgrounds. So that was the idea they had. (JB, August 19, 2020)

The faculty were apt to demonstrate incredulity regarding the veracity of colonial education in Nigeria, and regarded its shortcomings as a major impetus for the adoption of liberal education at UNN, as expressed by Dyke,

> The [colonial] education was not taking care of our culture. That's what we discovered… [but] by the time you come out from [this] university, you know exactly what is happening in the world… even in the country, and within your own environment... So, this was the philosophy behind [the] establishment of this GS. (August 19, 2019)

At this point, my participants pulled the forces of transnational mobility and partnerships into the story, especially the travels of Dr. Azikiwe and the collaboration with MSU as described in Chapter 4.

> Nnamdi Azikiwe, the founding father of this university of course, was an American product… So he had a different background and his background influenced [UNN], American education was more than British education… So he embedded the General Studies Program in our curriculum (JB, August 19, 2019).

> Most of the models, model to scholarship, actually we adopted your model. There might have been some modification or infiltration from [other] model sources but basically, we [tried] to follow the Michigan State University model. (James, August 21, 2019)

However, as I also described in Chapter 4, the idea of general education was initially met with skepticism, both at UNN and across Nigeria, and the road to legitimacy for GS was neither short nor smooth. Ben relayed his understanding of how the then-College of General Studies met these criticisms and affixed itself to the scaffolding of British-era specialization,

> The founders of this university wanted to copy the American system of education, but they were constrained by the attitude—the then attitude—of Nigerians towards American education. They say, during the colonial period, American education was underrated… For one to establish a university that bore the character of American education… it was something really difficult… The founders of the university tried to compromise. By

> compromising I mean they were torn between introducing American liberal system into the rigid system of education that we are used to. And to do that, what they thought was, to retain the specialist-oriented programs [and] have a separate unit that was involved in inculcating liberal education among the students. This is how we have [College] of General Studies, as it was then called… [with] the mission to… liberalize the education obtained. That is to say, while they would also get the specialist education, they should have something to let them have a liberal view of education. (August 15, 2019)

Still, the Global Forces of colonialism and transnational mobility and partnerships, while meaningful in faculty members' understanding of GS' genesis and historical significance, were not deemed salient by many faculty in their day-to-day work with today's GS curriculum at UNN, as I will elucidate in the following section on member checking. Before proceeding to member checking, however, a discussion of globalization—which *was* perceived as impacting the contemporary SGS by some participants—is in order.

Unlike the National Forces of the government, development, and Nigerianization, the Global Force of globalization was not deemed especially significant to the sensemaking of all faculty members (more on this under member checking) and the ways and degrees to which it was perceived in the curriculum varied from Unit to Unit, as I will clarify in the subsequent discussion of course-level findings. One domain where globalization was noted across faculty and Units, however, was what one interviewee from the Humanities termed "going digital" (JB, August 19, 2019), namely the adoption of Computer-Based Examinations (CBEs) throughout the SGS. While adopting a computerized format for examinations is arguably a pedagogical rather than curricular change, numerous faculty made clear that this shift was "all in a bid to keep tab with what is happening globally" (Joel, August, 13, 2020) and "to go along with what is

happening in the world today" (Jacob, August 21, 2019). Interestingly, UNN GS lecturers Ugwu and Ngwu (2017) write that the adoption of CBEs was not driven by the seemingly preeminent NUC but in fact due to the local "innovativeness" of UNN itself (p. 216).

However, there is one course where the government has explicitly mandated a heightened emphasis on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the GS curriculum—G.S. 111 Use of Library and Basic Research Skills—as noted by Use of Library instructor, Nemo (August 15, 2019). In the 2007 BMAS, one of the NUC's objectives for the national GSP is "exposing graduates of Nigerian Universities to the rudiments of ICT for computer literacy and ability to live usefully in *this ICT age*" (National Universities Commission, 2007, p. 14, emphasis added). To this end, the Use of Library course is intended to engender the "development of *modern* ICT, Hardware technology, Software technology, Input devices, Storage devices, Output devices, Communication and internet services, [and] Word processing skills" (p. 15, emphasis added). The NUC's emphasis on modernity is significant since Appadurai, in his seminal work on globalization *Modernity at Large* (1996), reminds us that the "deterritorialization," that is to say globalization, of technology is one of the hallmarks "of the *modern* world" (p. 37, emphasis added) exemplified by powerful post-industrial nations, especially the present-day USA (p. 31). Therefore, despite the disparate origins of the SGS-wide adoption of CBEs and the emphasis on ICTs-based content in G.S. 111—in the local agency of UNN's administration and leaderships and the national agency of the NUC, respectively—it is evident that the federal government's purposes are in agreement with faculty members' perceptions at UNN. That is, the aim of "going digital" is to be viewed as a modern, global player on the technology driven HE landscape of the contemporary world.

*Member checking*. Before moving on to findings at the level of individual Units and courses, where faculty reported exercising their agency as curricular actors in the SGS, I now describe the feedback I received from the three returning faculty in the 2020 follow-up interviews on the glonacal forces that I identified in the first portion of this chapter. To reiterate, member checking represents "taking data and interpretations back to… participants… so that they can confirm the credibility of the information" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). The three faculty members who member checked my preliminary findings all brought years of experience with GS and work across the SGS at UNN—in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences Units—and can thus be considered representative of their colleagues. While many of the faculty views that follow where introduced in the prior pages on program-level sensemaking, my critical stance toward this research (described in Chapter 3) demands that I explicitly foreground the "authentic experiential knowledge" of Nigerian GS faculty in their own words here (Godwin, 2015a, p. 229).

First, all of my faculty member checkers perceived the findings I presented as meaningfully describing the forces that have, and continue to, influenced the GS curriculum at UNN, responding that, "all the forces identified are relevant" (James, September 12, 2020), "I agree with you on the forces you enumerated" (Gloria, September 10, 2020), and "it's a comprehensive list" (Joel, August 13, 2020). That said, and consistent with what I've described thus far, they considered National Forces to be the most crucial, influencing both the GS curriculum overall as well as their own work individually. Gloria emphasized the role of the Nigerian government, writing, "the most salient forces are those at the National level (i.e. NUC) which has the authority not to accredit any course that does not follow the curriculum and therefore expunge it from the University" (September 10, 2020). James underscored national

development in his reflection on the curriculum and its purpose, "the most salient forces are related to development. Nigeria is underdeveloped, and one very effective way to facilitate its development is to produce graduates who are vastly aware of the challenges in the environment [and] the need to transform" (September 12, 2020). Finally, speaking to the importance of Nigerianization, Joel summed up the supremacy of National Forces perceived across my participants, "[GS] is now a Nigerian thing, Nigerian nationalization now… We are now trying to reinvent ourselves… we emphasize Nigeria and its people, Nigeria and its culture" (August 13, 2020).

Meanwhile, Forces flowing from the Global spatial dimension, especially colonialism and transnational partnerships, were not regarded as salient to faculty members' sensemaking of the current curriculum, though they acknowledged the essential role these forces played in the history of GS.

> The global forces you mentioned starting from experiences from colonization till present, I… believe that it helped to maybe galvanize the idea to establish GS programs in UNN. One, because the American school that brought the idea to UNN is a foreign body… But presently now I think… the impact of colonization in this part of the world... should not be overemphasized again, because it's been a while... since 1960, we have been on our own. So, their influence to me, in our education circle, it's minimal presently. Whatever… is happening now is what we've been able to develop over the years. (Joel, August 13, 2020)

James concurred, stating, "some of the forces like colonialism, globalisation, transnational partnerships… may have played critical roles at some points in the development of the General Studies Programme but national development shapes my approach to the curriculum"

(September 12, 2020). Here, James lumps the force globalization in with colonialism and transnational partnerships. However, he did acknowledge that "global trends in science and general social trends (example, liberalism and globalisation)… especially in Africa are usually taken into consideration in our curricular decisions." Similarly, Joel said, "I think everything we teach is useful to our students... to help them when they graduate and they come out as a society and also compete *globally*" (August 13, 2020, emphasis added). However, while globalization was understood as influencing the curriculum, it still trailed National Forces in significance. Joel continued, "we don't get instructions from outside Nigeria, that's to the best of my knowledge. Everything we do is just for national interest which I believe is in the right direction." This lack of explicit "instructions" at the Global level was affirmed by Gloria's contention that "Global influences are not so much important in making the curricula in the universities in Nigeria. Their influence is optional" (September 10, 2020). Thus, the 2020 member checking largely confirmed my findings from the 2019 on-site interviews, that faculty feel National Forces are the most salient, colonialism and transnational mobility and partnerships are chiefly expressed through shared narratives of the past, and the effects of globalization are real but variable and often unseen.

### Faculty Sensemaking and Agency at the Course-Level

In this final section on my findings, I examine the insights from my faculty interviewees on the course-level GS curriculum, namely the curriculum that they work with in their own Units within the SGS. Consistent with Stark and colleagues' (1997) study of American faculty, my Nigerian participants felt that they exercised the most agency in their curricular work at the course-level. Also comparable to Stark's American instructors, when asked what personal characteristics and experiences most influenced their work my 2020 member checkers routinely

cited their academic background and disciplinary training as especially meaningful (Joel, August 13, 2020; James, September 12, 2020). For instance, Gloria of the Natural Sciences shared that,

> I have attended school right from primary school to the Ph.D. level in the sciences just to get the knowledge which I know is crucial in the life of humans especially in the developing nations. Although the knowledge of science here is rusty because of lack of infrastructure, nevertheless, I try to use whatever little at my disposal to do my best. In other words, I have passion for science. (September 10, 2020)

However, whereas American faculty viewed course-level curriculum planning as a relatively independent process, in which they exercised "substantial autonomy" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Stark, et al., 1997, p. 110), my conversations with UNN faculty instead underscored the collaborative nature of curricular work in the GS Units. Faculty were prone to highlight the disciplinary diversity of their Units as actually "enriching" the curriculum that they collectively delivered to students (Mary & James, August 21, 2019). Therefore, before proceeding to discussions of the individual GS Units in turn, I first delineate the Unit-level curriculum change process, as reported by my participants, in order to clarify how individual and collective sensemaking translates into faculty agency in the SGS.

**Unit-Level Curriculum Change Process**

In all four Units of the SGS, GS courses are taught in two formats—general lectures in which the same topics are taught to large groups of students and more interactive seminars delivered to smaller groups. While lecture topics are common to all students taking a particular course each semester, seminar topics are designed with each smaller group of students' particular areas of specialization, that is their majors, in mind (Joel, August 13, 2020; James, September 12, 2020). Unit-level development of lecture and seminar topics, or what Joel calls "course

themes," begins with the curricular "template" provided by the NUC, which is then tailored by each university based on its own needs and context,

> The National Universities Commission has a template from which the university will now draw up topics from… Then each university will now go and domicile in their university based on the peculiarity of their area… For instance, in UNN here, you know we are domiciled in… South-Eastern Nigeria. So when we are talking about Nigerian, Peoples and Culture, we will look more of those cultures of the South-Eastern Nigeria to draw up topics from there, while those of the universities in the Western Nigeria will also do the same in their own region to get the topics that they feel that is peculiar to them there. (August 13, 2020)

At UNN, the Unit-level course topics (as well as syllabi, exams, etc.) are collaboratively drawn up, and periodically revised, by a "Curriculum Committee" in each Unit comprised of faculty from the various disciplines represented in the Unit (Gloria, September 10, 2020; James, September 12, 2020). Joel elaborated,

> In my unit… the curriculum committee sits down to draw up these topics. And in that committee, we have staff from various backgrounds, various disciplines. Then what we do now, we now agreed… on specific topic based on NUC guidelines, then the topics will be given out to lecturers to go and research and come up with materials for teaching materials. Then after that… we have a platform where the lecturers will now listen to experts. For instance, if I have a topic in [my discipline] … I will now explain to those of them in [other disciplines]… So, every lecturer will… first of all have the firsthand information from the expert, before we now go to the students to teach them… in the class. (Joel, August 13, 2020)

The collaborative nature of curricular work in the Units thus ensures both broad coverage in each domain of knowledge as well oversite from subject-matter experts in specific content areas. This work also involves other Unit-level Committees comprised of faculty members, such as an Academic Board which ratifies the work of the Curriculum Committee and an Examination Committee (James, September 10, 2020).

Furthermore, the course topics, or themes, are subject to approval by administrative actors at the University-level, such as the Vice Chancellor and University Senate, and SGS-level, such as the Dean and Unit Coordinators (Gloria, September 10, 2020; James, September 12, 2020). However, my participants perceived that these institutional bodies and actors typically defer to the NUC's guidelines laid out in the most current BMAS. Joel reports,

> No person, no faculty member, no Dean can influence what they teach here except that thing is in the NUC... Even the Senate itself... For instance, the last approval they gave… they asked us to bring the NUC guideline… before they could approve. Because anything outside of the NUC, nobody is going to approve, so there's little or no influence from those quarters except what we have in the NUC that is what is guiding us here. (August 13, 2020)

All that said, individual GS instructors do maintain some discretion, that is *agency*, to augment the approved curriculum in their courses based on their own disciplinary expertise. For instance, Gloria shared that in the Natural Sciences,

> Each instructor (lecturer) is assigned content based on the area of specialization (i.e. Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Agriculture etc.). the content is still based on the curriculum and is collaborative… [but] the instructor has some freedom in shaping the contents of his/her course(s) but still within the limit of the curricular. For example, the

> unit has the freedom to include emerging world or national problems in the area of sciences. (September 10, 2020)

James agreed, noting, "individual lecturers are expected to source for materials to supplement the ones recommended by the Unit… to aid in the delivery of the contents to students" (September 12, 2020). However, James continued, "each lecturer is required to enrich but not to deviate from the approved contents of the course." Therefore, it was clear to the faculty that their individual agency to augment their own courses does not extend to overtly deviating from the curriculum as approved at either the national or institutional levels.

**Humanities**

The Humanities is perhaps the most Nigerianized Unit in the SGS today, tasked with taking "care of the culture of the people" according to English instructor Jacob (August 21, 2019). This emphasis on the "culture of the people," has long existed in the Humanities courses, but has gained greater prominence in the eyes of the faculty since the 2007 BMAS. Both of the Humanities lecturers that I spoke with, JB and Joel, viewed the old Humanities I and II courses as too "basic," "surface level," and lacking in the necessary context to make Nigerian students see the relevance of the Humanities in their own lives (August 19 & 21, 2019). They perceived that the NUC's revised courses were intended to address these shortcomings and unify the curricular content in the Humanities, as JB explained,

> One, they [the NUC] introduced philosophy and logic… they felt students should understand basic philosophy and basic logic for critical reasoning, for better reasoning… Then the second one was, study of Nigeria and Peoples and Cultures. They felt that we should know more about Nigeria and our environment and our own society… They wanted us to emphasize Nigeria this time around… the government was particularly

> interested in the study of Nigerian peoples and cultures, for national unity and integration. (August 19, 2019)

In terms of sensemaking then, faculty in the Humanities understood their Unit, and especially G.S. 208 Nigerian Peoples and Cultures, as being vitally responsible for engendering cohesion among Nigeria's myriad of religious, linguistic, and ethnic groups.

This same course, G.S. 208, though also functioned as a space where faculty could individually enrich the curriculum by exercising their own agency to underscore learning objectives of personal significance to themselves. For example, in addition to attending to the federal government's concern with the nation's cultural pluralism, Joel strove to teach his students about their *own* cultures, with particular emphasis on those of southeastern Nigeria. He shared an anecdote about an Igbo youth raised in Lagos (traditionally Yoruba land) who came to the University knowing little about his own cultural heritage or language, and noted that most GS students "don't understand their basic culture… [the] culture of their community" (August, 21, 2019). To remedy this perceived lack of cultural literacy among his pupils, Joel purposefully designed assignments in his courses to "make them [students] go to their communities to research… to be enticed to [their] communities." Thus, while still adhering to the national curriculum standards, Humanities instructors can and do exercise agency in their courses to add local nuance and character to the Nigerianized content they deliver to their students.

**Social Sciences**

The Social Sciences is yet another Unit where the NUC's 2007 BMAS requirements instigated significant changes to the course-level GS curriculum at UNN, namely the addition Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) content. However, as I discussed in Chapter 4 this national shift was met with uncertainty by some of the faculty in the SGS who felt content from their own

disciplines was being supplanted in the new courses, leading them to exercise their collective agency at the institutional level to drive change. As Dyke explained,

> So, [PCS], they say that it will be… situated in social sciences… the natural fact [is that this]… was… contrary… to what we used to do. It's supposed to be a part, an insignificant… part of what social sciences do… it… means all the other disciplines will go. So, we modified it ourselves, and sent it to [University] Senate, and the Senate approved… Because… we have to retain the basis of the social sciences. (August 19, 2019)

This faculty led initiative led to the current make-up of the Social Sciences courses at UNN—G.S. 202 Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies was retained while G.S. 201 was redesignated "The Social Sciences" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2019).

Still, delivering G.S. 202, which like the Use of English and Use of Library courses is required of *all* undergraduates at UNN regardless of their major, remains an essential function of the Unit, and my participants from the Social Sciences, Dyke and James, spent much of our time together elucidating their sensemaking and agency in relation to this course. Both interviewees emphasized the salience of national development, and especially those factors which militate against it in Nigeria, in their understanding of the crucial role played by PCS. According to Dyke, "there are a lot of conflicts in Nigeria, a lot. We… draw [examples] from those conflicts [to] better understanding [among] the students" (August 19, 2019). James went even further, contending G.S. 202 is, "also intervention... It's not just about education… Every [graduate with]… knowledge about how conflict arises and how it could be addressed… should also apply that knowledge" in Nigeria, citing ethnic and religious strife and conflicts over resources throughout the country as examples (August 21, 2019). Touching on the interplay between

national and global dynamics, James indicated that conflict in Nigeria is "becoming an international problem" and that "internationalization" plays a role in "almost all issues [of] security in Nigeria." Still, consistent with faculty perceptions at the program-level across the SGS, instructors in the Social Sciences Unit persistently stressed the importance National Forces in their sensemaking of PCS.

The salience for faculty of National Forces, relative to those flowing from the global spatial dimension, is notable in the Social Sciences Unit, particularly in regard to G.S. 202. Remember, numerous primary textual sources communicated that the addition of PCS content to Nigeria's national GSP originated from a *transnational partnership* between the NUC and the United Nations' University for Peace (University of Nigeria, 2012, 2019). However, the involvement of the University for Peace was not remarked upon by either Dyke or James in our conversations. Instead, both faculty members emphatically attributed the shift to teaching PCS to the NUC above all others, with James stating, "the National Universities Commission… required… all universities… to expose… students to peace and conflict studies because in contemporary society there's a lot of issues bordering on peace and conflict and Nigeria has a fair share of those issues" (August 21, 2019). The Social Sciences courses thus represent a space where global influences, while demonstrably present, are deemed relatively immaterial in faculty members' sensemaking of the course-level curriculum.

**Use of English and the Library**

As I described in the preceding sections on program-level sensemaking, the salience apportioned by faculty to forces flowing from the Global level of my theoretical framework, especially globalization, was variable across Units in the SGS. Whereas Humanities and Social Sciences faculty emphasized National Forces in our conversations, instructors in the Use of

English Unit—inclusive of G.S. 111 Use of Library—did consider Global Forces to be significant to both their own disciplines and to their curricular work in the SGS. For example, Nemo of the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library contended, "library is a science… library practice is the same everywhere… when you're teaching… students Use of Library… [you're] teaching them how to use the library all over the universe" (August 15, 2019). English instructor Edu concurred noting,

> [Use of English] is meant for any person who has passed by here to go anywhere in the world and get himself established… The course content is not meant just to satisfy the demands within Nigeria alone… People will go away, leave the continent, and then go to other continents. So, it's also meant that when the person gets there, he is equipped with the knowledge to face the challenges of other parts of the world. (August 19, 2019)

Edu's contention about the universality of the English language can also be ascribed to the ICT-focused content in G.S. 111, which I discussed previously, and to the process of curricular change in the Unit. As Nemo explained, "for library science or librarianship, ICT changed fundamentally how we work, and so the content for Use of Library had to change to reflect those changes" (August 15, 2019). Thus, global shifts and trends, as well as the desire for GS graduates to have a "global impact" (Jacob, August 21, 2019), factors heavily into the sensemaking and agency of Use of English faculty in their curricular work.

Still, even in the Use of English Unit Global Forces, as faculty perceive them, remain highly imbricated with Nigeria's national environment and needs. Jacob described English's essential function as a *lingua franca* to bridge the divide between the country's numerous linguistic groups.

> The English language is our lingua franca. It is the language which we use to communicate with others because Nigeria has more than 250 languages that are mutually unintelligible… English has come up as a very necessary tool… [and] a remedy… if I go to another ethnic group and I'm able to speak English and that person is able to speak English, we'll be able to interact and understand one another. Without English it wouldn't have been possible. (Jacob, August 21, 2019)

Therefore, the faculty regarded it as especially important that their course, "help [students] to situate their use of English… in the overall context of the Nigerian linguistic environment." One of the ways Use of English instructors exercise their agency to contextualize English for their Nigerian students is by utilizing the works of Nigerian authors in their course. Jacob expounded, "mostly Nigerian authors have been used… many more authors are coming up in the country... and because of that, we patronize them as… a means of encouraging them to write in the English language." Thus, faculty members' mindfulness of national issues and content, indicative of national development and Nigerianization, demarcates and informs their delivery of subjects that they nonetheless understand to be fundamentally global, namely English and library science.

**Natural Sciences**

Finally, we come to the Natural Sciences Unit. The Natural Sciences Unit represents a space in the SGS where, perhaps more than in any of the other Units, the imbrication of National Global Forces is evident in faculty perceptions and actions. Regarding National Forces, in our 2019 conversation all three faculty participants—Gloria, Mary, and KK—stressed their Unit's role in preparing GS graduates who are capable of tackling the challenges faced by developing nations, with particular emphasis on Nigeria specifically and Africa broadly (August 21, 2019). Furthermore, in our 2020 follow-up correspondence Gloria also highlighted the incorporation of

Nigeria-specific topics in her courses (i.e. Nigerianization) and the national agency of the NUC in delimiting the Unit's overall work and mission (September 10, 2020).

However, this focus on National Forces, overlayed with attention to all of sub-Saharan Africa, was juxtaposed with a conviction evident across the SGS that the Natural Sciences Unit deals with 'universal' scientific principles suited to addressing global issues. Humanities instructor JB compared his Unit and the Natural Sciences as follows, "The Humanities specifically [is driven] by these local needs. For the Natural Sciences it is more universal… [the Natural Sciences is] evolving into… more universal themes—things that have global standards, that everyone should know" (August 19, 2020). Natural Sciences lecturer KK elaborated on JB's point and explained how faculty in the Unit exercise their agency to add new course topics on global issues, such as climate change,

> Gradually, the issue of… climate change became another global issue that all nations got consigned. We didn't waste time to bring it into the curriculum. We have topics on climate change today. That tells you that our program is not just static. It's an ever-evolving program and it evolves to address the present need we have in our society. (August 21, 2019)

During this same conversation, my faculty participants were generous enough to share lists of the seminar and term paper topics recently assigned to students in the Natural Sciences I and II courses. These class handouts illustrate that Natural Sciences lecturers concurrently deliver instruction on national topics ("Food Security in Nigeria," "Agro-Industry in Nigeria," etc.), African topics ("Ebola," "Sickle cell anemia," etc.), and global topics ("Global climate change," "Human genome project," etc.) each semester (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2016a, 2016b). So, in the Natural Sciences Unit faculty blend ostensibly global, or universal, methods and

disciplines with UNN's setting in Nigeria (and Africa) to simultaneously draw connections to the wider world of science and to situate science education in their own (and their students') immediate milieu.

## Conclusion

Thanks in no small part to the unending generosity of spirit, patience, and expertise of my faculty participants, I have in the preceding pages sketched out a framework for understanding not only those forces that have influenced Nigeria's innovative model of liberal education—the GSP— over six decades, but also for understanding how these forces intersect and diverge in the curricular work at a specific Nigerian HEI—UNN—today. First, I have, through the lens of my theoretical framework, demonstrated how Global Forces (colonialism, globalization, and transnational mobility and partnerships), National Forces (development, Nigerianization, and governmental and national organizations), and Local Forces (interpersonal dynamics, shared narratives, and institutional actors and administration) mutually inform each other in ways that are at once recognizable to comparative education scholars the world over and remain nonetheless unique to the SGS's context in southeastern Nigeria. Second, and of equal importance, I have described how these forces, though all clearly significant to the story of GS, are variably perceived and acted upon by Nigerian liberal educators based on their own disciplines, backgrounds, collaborations, and individual and collective senses of what it means to shape young minds in Nigeria. While local cultures, languages, and traditions were of special significance to some faculty (as in the Humanities Unit) and the impact of globalization was most evident among others (especially in the Use of English and Natural Sciences), National Forces were salient across Units, fields, and faculty. General Studies is after all, as Joel so aptly put it, "a Nigerian thing" (August 13, 2020).

Still, in the end case studies, like this one, are inherently about what "can be learned about *the single case*" (Stake, 2005, p. 243, emphasis added). So why should international and comparative educationists care about the history and actors of a single liberal education curriculum at a single university in a single country? Well, in the next and final chapter of this dissertation I lay out why we should all care, by clarifying some of the most significant implications and contributions of this research in three domains. First, I describe the implications of GS for re-envisioning liberal education globally, and especially for updating the Western literature on global liberal education introduced in Chapter 2. Second, I discuss what has been learned regarding curricular and faculty work in Africa that can inform future comparative education research. Third, I review the theoretical implications of my adapted and expanded Glonacal Framework—namely, the *theoretical generalizability* of my research (Blatter, 2008, p. 69)—for the field of international and comparative higher education overall. Finally, I conclude with a consideration of what this study can*not* tell us and offer some possible directions for future research.

# CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this study I have contended that sub-Sharan Africa, rather than being an "underrepresented region" as argued by some scholars (Godwin, 2013), is actually an underexplored region in the global liberal education literature with much to teach us. This contention is borne out by both GS' uncommonly long history at UNN—sixty years at the time of this writing—relative to most other previously documented international liberal education programs as well as its present ubiquity across Nigerian higher education. However, GS' potential for informing the global discourse on liberal education in this underexplored region has been stalled for want of empirical research grounded in theory. Therefore, in order to more rigorously inform discussions of liberal education in sub-Saharan Africa, I addressed three empirically investigable research questions:

1. What are the forces that influenced the initial development of and ongoing adjustments to the GS curriculum at UNN?
2. How do faculty at UNN's School of General Studies (SGS) make sense of the forces that influenced the initial development of and ongoing adjustments to the GS curriculum?
3. How do GS faculty exercise agency in their curricular work as they negotiate making sense of these forces?

Through a qualitative case study design, I leveraged the methods of archival research, textual analysis, and semi-structured qualitative interviews to answer these questions. In doing so, I explicated how an African liberal education curriculum—GS—has manifested and adapted in practice from the perspective of those live and work with it most closely—faculty members.

Overarching findings from this years-long inquiry include a series of imbricated yet oft competing global, national, and local forces that have influenced GS over the decades (see pages

89-101). The analytical and practical power of these glonacal findings lies not merely in their identification—perhaps not acutely revelatory in the era of globalization—but in situating them in UNN's unique national, institutional, and historical context to highlight how liberal education has been adapted in an African curriculum overtime and in practice. In terms of faculty sensemaking across the SGS, I have shown that the significance attached to Global Forces varies among curricular actors depending on their disciplinary backgrounds, but the salience ascribed to National Forces, construed according to Local (or institutional) influences and agencies, is widespread in curricular work across Units. Regarding the agency exercised by GS faculty as "curricular change agents" (Hill, 2019), my findings point to both continuities with research on American faculty (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Stark et al., 1997)—namely that faculty agency is most strongly perceived at the course-level—and divergences with such research—such as the collaborative rather than autonomous nature of curricular planning and adaptation within Units in the SGS.

In this chapter, I discuss my findings on GS at UNN across three discrete yet overlapping domains. First, I explore what this research can teach us both conceptually and practically about liberal education in global contexts, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, to drive the American-centric discourse introduced in Chapter 2 forward in more authentic and inclusive ways. Second, I focus in on what I have learned about curricular and faculty work in Africa and the implications for future studies of international HE. Third, I elaborate on the contributions to theory derived from my theoretical framework's extensions and modifications to the "glonacal" perspective (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002) for education scholars working in international and comparative contexts broadly. I end this chapter by offering some promising directions for future research.

## Re-envisioning Global and African Liberal Education

### Moving Off the Margins in Nigeria

In this research I have through the exploration of a single liberal education curriculum complicated the underlying assumptions put forth by American scholars about the purportedly "underrepresented" status of African HEIs on the global liberal education landscape. With more than two-hundred universities within its borders (Fatunde, 2020)—all of which are required to deliver GS courses by the NUC (Gloria, August 10, 2020; also National Universities Commission, 2007, 2014)—Nigeria's GSP singlehandedly problematizes the narrative that liberal education is an ostensibly "peripheral" and non-"mainstream" curricular model that flounders for legitimacy in sub-Saharan Africa (Godwin, 2013; Godwin, 2017a; 2018a). My findings show that, though GS struggled for legitimacy among UNN's academics and students at its inception in the 1960s (Ben, August 15, 2019; also Ezeocha, 1977; Fafunwa, 1984; University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2012), the SGS has since become "the pride of the University [because] it showcases" UNN's seminal contribution to mainstream Nigerian HE education (Edu, August 19, 2020).

Indeed, Nigerian universities offering GS courses today include the University of Ibadan, Nigeria's oldest, most prestigious, and historically most British-esque HEI, through its "Centre for General Studies" (University of Ibadan, 2018b). Even American University of Nigeria (AUN)—the only Nigerian liberal education institution identified in Godwin's (2013) Global Liberal Education Inventory (GLEI) (see page 32)—which employs the nomenclature of "General Education" (GE) indicative of its "American-style" branding (Ukpai, 2018), adheres to the essence if not the terminology of the national GSP requirements. Comparable to GS at UNN, AUN's GE requirements—accredited by the NUC since 2008 (American University of Nigeria,

n.d.)—include undergraduate coursework on "Nigerian Peoples and Cultures" along with survey courses on Critical Thinking (similar to Logic, Philosophy and Human existence), Science (akin to Natural Sciences), Composition (analogous to Use of English), and ICTs (as in Use of Library and Basic Research Skills) (American University of Nigeria, 2018, p. 63). AUN also offers a concentration in "Peace and Conflict Resolution" (i.e., Peace and Conflict Studies) through its School of Arts and Sciences (p. 65). Revealingly, Ben of the Use of English Unit at UNN noted that across Nigeria,

> In other universities what we call the Humanities has a different name altogether. What we call Social Sciences has a different name altogether. What we call Natural Sciences has a different name. But, in spirit, they are the same thing. The nomenclature changed… Even though it had the spirit of the University of Nigeria. (August 15, 2019)

Thus, though AUN augments these common courses with additional curricular components—such as first-year seminars, community-based learning, and sundry distribution requirements (American University of Nigeria, 2018, p. 63)—even this most "American-style" of Nigerian HEIs coheres to the "spirit" of the national GSP. Putting differences in vocabulary and branding aside, liberal education, as originally modeled after GS at UNN and since mandated according to the NUC's BMAS requirements, pervades Nigeria's higher education system to a degree that challenges the overtly American-centric assumption that the USA is liberal education's natural "home" in the 21st century (Godwin, 2015a, p. 227).

**Adjusting Assumptions**

Beyond merely putting Nigeria on the liberal education map in a more authentic way, the findings of this research also have powerful implications for how liberal education in Africa, and developing nations broadly, is conceptualized by scholars and practitioners. Western scholarship

has posited several suppositions regarding liberal education's supposedly peripheral status relative to mainstream higher education in most national contexts. Among these claims are that "the growth [of liberal education programs] is not driven by governments or international agencies" (Boyle, 2019b, p. 128) and that liberal educators "lack… formalized network[s] for sharing information, exploring common and divergent practices, and collectively advocating for their model" outside of developed countries in North America, Europe, and Asia (Godwin, 2018a, p. 13). These contentions are not borne out by either the specific history of GS at UNN or a holistic appraisal of the GSP in Nigeria.

Not only was GS' genesis at UNN sanctioned by the regional government of Eastern Nigerian, beginning with the 1995 legislation establishing UNN and the 1961 law enumerating the curriculum (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1961, 1992), but its formative years were collaboratively orchestrated by a host of international partners, organizations, and agencies including MSU, USAid, and the British IUC among others (Pettit, 1969). Since then, the Nigerian government's role through its accreditation arm the NUC, both in propagating and adapting the GSP, has expanded rather than contracted, and at times still involves collaboration with transnational partners like the UN's University for Peace (University of Nigeria, 2012, 2019). Furthermore, regarding 'formalized networks for sharing information' recall that GS faculty and administrators were themselves intimately involved in founding numerous professional non-governmental organizations, such as "National Association of General Studies" and the "Association of General Studies Deans/Directors" (Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017), that advocate for GS' unique model of liberal education in Nigeria. Such associations have instigated numerous gatherings, from the 1980s (Oluikpe, 1984, 1987) to the present (Nwosu, 2017b; Ugwu, Ngwu, & Ajah, 2019), where GS practitioners share 'common and divergent practices' on

aspects of GS' delivery ranging from management to pedagogy and curricular planning. Thus, GS in Nigeria stands as an exemplar for liberal educators in other national contexts, demonstrating how the powers of government, international partnerships, and collective advocacy across HEIs can be leveraged to move liberal education off the margins of disparate HE systems in practice.

**An Expanded Framework for Liberal Education**

Finally, this case study of the SGS at UNN—as a large, public Land Grant university (Ezeocha, 1977; Lilford, 2017; Poloma & Szelenyi, 2019)—represents an adoption of the 'expanded framework' for conceptualizing liberal education that Rossman and colleagues (2020) recently called for among American scholars. These researchers contend that in order to holistically evaluate the impact of liberal education on students in the USA, researchers must first acknowledge that "students receive [liberal education] across diverse sectors of postsecondary education—from traditional liberal arts colleges to large state research universities" (p. 6). The problematic conflation of liberal education as a curricular model with the specific institutional type of the private liberal arts college (AAC&U, n.d.; see APPEDNIX A) has until now also constrained studies of liberal education globally and in sub-Saharan Africa specifically.

For example, all four of the African liberal education programs identified in Godwin's (2013) GLEI were established recently compared to GS at UNN (since the 1990s) and three, including both AUN in Nigeria and the relatively well-described West African institution of Ashesi University (Gouillart, 2009; Grant, 2016; Redden, 2009), are independent private institutions more akin to liberal arts colleges in the USA. By instead investigating liberal education at a mainstream public university over time, rather than "snapshots" of "stand-alone"

institutions as Godwin put it (2013, p. 42, 205), this case study has illuminated the impact of GS not only at my specific case site—UNN's SGS—but across an entire national system of higher education. Such findings also have compelling implications for research in the future. One of the shared narratives within the SGS is that UNN's pioneering efforts with GS impacted not only Nigeria but "the whole of the African Continent" (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2019, Dean's Welcome). Additional studies of general education programs in Africa, whether descending from GS or not, to determine if such curricula truly represent cases of liberal education (as I illustrated for UNN in Table 1 in APPENDIX D) have the potential to expand our framework for thinking about liberal education's varying manifestations and impact on the continent to an even greater extent.

## Implications for African and Comparative Education

### Colonialism in African Curricula

This study also offers novel insights on curricular work in African contexts and points to potential revisions for how researchers conceptualize faculty perceptions, efforts, and curricular planning in sub-Saharan HE. First, there is a disconnect between the literature on African curricular studies and the testimony of my faculty participants at UNN regarding the Global Force of colonialism that deserves clarification. As discussed in Chapter 1, the literature on postsecondary curricula in Africa to date exhibits a preoccupation with the legacies and enduring ramifications of European colonialism on the continent (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Heleta, 2016; LeGrange, 2016; Mngomezulu & Hadebe, 2018). While this fixation is arguably appropriate—and my research is not meant in any way to imply that the colonial experience was unimportant to the trajectory of Nigeria's national development and higher education system (in fact, it was of enormous consequence)—this reality was not widely

testified to by my faculty participants at UNN in discussions of how *they* make sense of and act in relation to the contemporary GS curriculum. Only one interviewee mentioned an unspoken "anti-colonial" ethos in his teaching, and then only in the contexts of G.S. 208 Nigerian Peoples and Cultures (JB, August 19, 2019). More commonly, my member checkers in 2020 were prone to assign less salience to the global-level force of colonialism than to National Forces in both their work in the Units and across the SGS overall (Gloria, September 10, 2020; James, September 12, 2020; Joel, August 13, 2020). How then are comparative HE researchers to make sense of this disjuncture between long-standing conclusions from the literature and the lived experiences of Nigerian faculty themselves?

Well, it is undeniable that indications of ongoing neocolonialism can be gleaned from my interviews. One example is the universality attributed to the language of Nigeria's erstwhile colonizers—English—in the Use of English Unit. Edu contended that English-language instruction, "is not meant just to satisfy the demands within Nigeria alone… [it] is meant for any person who has passed by here to go anywhere in the world" (August 19, 2019). Shahjahan & Edwards (2020) remind us that, "the adoption of liberal education globally… accompanies an investment in English language learning, creating an educational landscape that privileges… the West [and]… evinces the asymmetrical power relations at play" (p. 8). Moreover, the lasting attention paid across the SGS to the National Forces of development (given Nigeria's chronic underdevelopment during the colonial era) and Nigerianization (imbricated as it is with the concepts of "indigenization" and "decolonization" (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Poitras Pratt et al., 2018)) further reveals colonialism's continued influence on the GS curriculum. However, among my interviewees these various neocolonial and anti-colonial logics were typically bounded by discussions of "Nigerian nationalization" (Joel, August 13, 2020) rather than direct appeals back

to the colonial experience. So, rather than indicating that colonialism was unimportant to GS at UNN—it was—my findings instead suggest that this historical global force is not *perceived* by Nigerian faculty to be especially salient to their contemporary curricular work in practice, and is instead either relegated to "shared narratives" of the past (as discussed in Chapter 5) or subsumed into national discourses that faculty deem to be of greater consequence in present-day Nigeria.

**The "National Container" in Perspective**

Second, I return to Shahjahan and Kezar's (2013) concept of the "national container" introduced in Chapter 1 (see page 8). Consistent with my theoretical framework, these scholars argue that recent "globalization literature has suggested that the nation-state has become 'more porous' because of global forces and imperatives" (p. 20). They advance that the latent power of this new lens on global change in HE has heretofore been impeded by the widespread assumption that the "nation-state" remains the "natural category or unit of analysis," and that this assumption "fixes" researchers into outmoded ways of thinking about education and society broadly (p. 20). While I generally agree with Shahjahan and Kezar's assertion, we as researchers must not be "fixed" only by our own sensemaking but also remain receptive to the sensemaking of our research participants. In my study, the faculty at UNN regularly highlighted the salience of National Forces, relative to Global Forces, in their understanding of the contemporary GS curriculum and their work with it. If GS is adjudged by its stakeholders to be "a Nigerian thing now" (Joel, August 13, 2020) that "propels [faculty] to find *ingenious* ways of impacting… Nigerian society, Africa, and the world in general" (James, September 12, 2020, emphasis added), then this finding complicates the concerns Shahjahan and Kezar raise over the "national container" and "methodological nationalism" in comparative and international higher education

(2013, p. 20). As Teichler (1996) reminds scholars, in order to be *comparative,* research need not address "phenomena of higher education in more than one 'culture', 'society' or 'nation,'" but can do so "in a single one in *comparative perspective*" (p. 448, emphasis added).

Indeed, though Marginson and Rhoades (2002), echoed by Shahjahan and Kezar (2013), contend that "in using the nation-state as the… unit of analysis for international comparison… local variations are flattened out… issues of 'street level' implementation are obscured… [and] global forces remain shadowy" (p. 305), my findings shine a light on the nuances of local sensemaking and agency across these dimensions. This case study—despite its boundedness in Nigeria—highlights local variations and implementations in GS to clarify how National Forces are tailored by local agency at UNN, as seen in former-Dean Nwosu's introduction of Igbo language studies in the Humanities Unit (Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017) and the Use of English Unit's self-determined "patronage" of Nigerian authors (Jacob, August 21, 2019). The interrelationships between National and Local Forces are also evinced by the imbrication of the national project of *Nigerianization* with the more local processes of 'localization' and 'indigenization' as described in Chapter 5 (see pages 96 and 106). Furthermore, my findings dispel some of the shadows surrounding Global Forces in curricular work in the SGS, both concerning the gradations in salience ascribed to the influence of *globalization* by faculty depending on their disciplinary backgrounds and Units (see page 110) and perceptions of the influence of *colonialism* discussed in the preceding section of the present chapter. Therefore, I hold that scholarship like mine that explores phenomena in a single national context retains the power to enhance understanding of forces at all glonacal levels so long as it follows Shahjahan and Kezar's prescription to conceive of HE as a "complex" and "*multidimensional*" enterprise

that is not "exclusively associated with the nation-state or internally driven," as my multi('spatial')dimensional theoretical lens and findings attest (2013, p. 27, emphasis added).

**Contemporary Collaboration and Traditional Collectivism**

Third, there is a thought-provoking potential linkage between the relatively collaborative nature of course-level curricular work at UNN, contrasted with the more independent and "autonomous" course planning reported by American faculty (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Stark et al., 1997), and traditional education in pre-colonial African societies that merits further examination. Recall that my faculty interviewees routinely underscored collaboration in their descriptions of curricular work in the Units of the SGS, as exemplified by Gloria: "all academic activities in the Unit (Natural Sciences) are done collaboratively" (September 10, 2020). This finding bears striking similarities to the 'collectivism' characteristic of the delivery and provision of traditional sub-Saharan education compared to the "Western individualism" that undergirds HE in the USA and Europe (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; LeGrange, 2016, p. 9). Nigerian-born researcher Ezeanya-Esiobu elaborates,

> Education in most of traditional black Africa was… not done in isolation, but involved a collection of individuals… traditional education in Africa… relied extensively on community effort. The high importance attached to education makes the popular African saying that 'it takes a village to raise a child.' (2019, p. 21-22)

In UNN's SGS, this communal, collectivist mindset informs not only the work of faculty themselves, but is also discernible in the aspirations they hold for their students. For instance, Edu told me that,

> In Africa we have what we call an extended family system, and there family members… have meetings. The person may come from a village where he is the only undergraduate.

> The family will look up on him to be the secretary of the family meeting, and then he has to keep minutes. That knowledge he has gained from GS will give him the opportunity to know and be able to write minutes of a meeting. (August 19, 2019)

Similarly, and as described in Chapter 5, Joel of the Humanities Unit exercises his agency as an instructor to design assignments that "entice" students to apply their learning in their home communities. He holds that not only do "the community people [i.e. other community members]… appreciate" this engagement, but that it reinforces students' cultural ties to the communities themselves (August 21, 2019). So, GS faculty understand their role as going beyond merely teaching individual students to include providing educational services for whole families and even strengthening entire communities. However, limitations inherent to my case study research design, in which findings are derived from a single curriculum at a single university, make it untenable to determine emphatically whether this intriguing potential connection between traditional African education and contemporary curricular work is truly indicative of a broader pattern or is instead idiosyncratic to the structure of the SGS at UNN. Further studies of course-level curricular work at other HEIs in Nigeria and across Africa are needed to flesh out this speculative relationship.

## Contributions to Theory

### Extending and Adapting the Glonacal Perspective

The theoretical framework I developed to make sense of my findings also has much to offer researchers working across the domain of comparative and international higher education who are concerned with refining concepts from the literature and advancing theory in rigorous and nuanced ways. To begin with, this study renders an important theoretical contribution in its application of Marginson and Rhoades' (2002) "Glonacal" Perspective. While Godwin's (2013)

synthesis of "rationales" for why liberal education programs are established in disparate regions—namely "global macro," "national macro," and "micro" rationales (p. 114)—demonstrates an awareness of the spatial and cultural dimensions addressed in my study, the literature on global liberal education has yet to widely engage with this body of theory (see page 19). A handful of studies do discuss interrelationships between 'global' and 'local' influences—denotive of "*glocal*ization" as described in Chapter 1 (Robertson, 2003, emphasis added)—pertaining to liberal education in a few contexts, such as Europe (Sklad et al., 2015) and the MENA region (Al-Hendawi et al., 2019), but this is not the case with "glo*na*cality" inclusive of the National level forces that proved so central in my findings (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002, emphasis added).

Previous studies that have employed the concept of "glonacality" have instead primarily examined matters of administration, policy, and leader decision-making in international HE (Cantwell & Maldonado□Maldonado, 2009; Marginson & Sawir, 2005). By focusing on liberal education specifically, and curricular and faculty work generally, my project extends the utility of the Glonacal Perspective in a way that is replicable by other international and comparative education researchers working with curricula in different global contexts. Moreover, my research does more than just apply glonacality in a novel way. In my theoretical framework, I adapted Marginson and Rhoades' (2002) original heuristic by adding fresh conceptual components and clarifying old ones. I maintain that these theoretical upgrades not only enhance the 'theoretical generalizability' (Blatter, 2008) of my findings but may prove useful for other case study researchers.

*Sensemaking*. First, I employed the concept of "sensemaking" (Hill, 2019; Weick, 1995) as a linchpin connecting the spatial dimension, or levels, of the Glonacal Perspective and

Marginson and Rhoades' (2002) concept of "agency" (see APPENDIX B). Marginson and Rhoades argue that by *exercising agency*, individuals and groups "take action… at the global, national, and local levels" (p. 289). However, they do not present a satisfying explanation for how this action relates back to the 'entities and organizations,' that is the "agencies," that exert influence over HE actors and institutions according to their model (p. 289). Sensemaking, or the reflective process of meaning construction that faculty engage in to understand such influences within their own milieu(s) and work, is impeccably suited to fill this gap because it is itself "action-oriented and results in a decision made" (Hill, 2019, p. 15). Therefore, the theoretical power of my revised framework to guide future research lies in the interactional relationship between these two constructs—sensemaking and agency. Sensemaking illuminates how faculty reach decisions in order to exercise their agency in relation to Glonacal influences and agencies, that is *forces*, and when faculty exercise agency in their curricular work they in turn affect subsequent instances of sensemaking.

*Forces*. Second, I have clarified and refined the long-employed concept of "forces" in a way that is potentially potent across multiple disciplines and bodies of theory in social scientific research. The term *forces* has been utilized by numerous scholars in fields ranging from education to anthropology. However, previous research has typically applied 'forces' as a catch-all label for other more well-defined concepts stemming from whatever theoretical lens is being employed—whether "agencies" (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002), (institutional) "logics" (Friedland & Alford, 1991), "flows" (Marginson & Sawir, 2005), or "scapes" (Appadurai, 1996), etc.—demonstrating a lack of conceptual precision across spheres of knowledge. In my theoretical framework, I synthesized ideas from these various academic traditions to create a two-pronged classification for categorizing forces more rigorously. Forces, as I conceptualize

them, include (1) Marginson and Rhoades' (2002) second definition of "*agencies*"—namely, entities or organizations that operate and wield influence at the global, national, or local levels (p. 289)—and, (2) the more free-flowing category of "*influences*" akin to "logics" (Friedland & Alford, 1991) and "ideoscapes" (Appadurai, 1996). Thus, my work charts a path forwarded for researchers weary of discussing 'forces' vaguely rather than with the exactitude worthy of such a widespread theoretical concept.

**Multidirectional Glonacal Forces**

Finally, I conclude my discussion of theory with a reminder—perhaps not wholly novel but essential nonetheless—that glonacal forces flow in *both* directions. Marginson & Rhoades (2002) stress that the power of the Glonacal Perspective lies in is its acknowledgement of the intersectional, interactional, and mutually determining character of global change in HE (p. 288-289). While this study focused on the GS curriculum as manifested at UNN overtime, it bears accentuating that that the transnational partnerships (see page 92) that distinguished UNN's formative years impacted not only the SGS but also the other institutions, organizations, and agencies that collaborated in Nsukka. This is especially evident in the case of my own university, MSU. A recent article in MSU's alumni magazine relates that,

> The lasting impact of the partnership is also evident across MSU. The experience and expertise that MSU faculty gained in Nigeria became the foundation for MSU's world-renowned African Studies Center. Currently, MSU has more than 200 faculty engaged in research, teaching and partnership across the African continent. MSU regularly teaches more African languages, produces more PhDs on Africa, and offers more study abroad programs in Africa than any other U.S. university. (Michigan State University, 2020, p. 13)

MSU's present preeminence across the field of African Studies in the USA is therefore directly attributable to its partnership with UNN sixty years ago. As Cantwell & Maldonado-Maldonado (2009) insist, glonacal change, including transnational partnerships, is a "dynamic process in which universities take part, not a state of being to which universities respond" (p. 292). Thus, UNN was not a passive recipient of foreign assistance but an active global partner that exerted its own formidable and long-lasting influence.

## Directions for Future Research

### Additional Case Studies

The findings of this research are not all-encompassing, and what this study cannot elucidate is just as noteworthy as what it can. There remain several promising avenues for future research through which scholars can advance my inquiry to cultivate greater understanding of liberal education across Nigeria, Africa, and the world over. First, additional case studies of liberal education in sub-Saharan Africa, and other underexplored regions, are needed to clarify and corroborate the findings and implications I have proffered in the preceding chapters. Such research has the capacity to answer outstanding questions that lie beyond the reach of any solitary case study, even my own. For instance:

- How widespread are general education programs in sub-Saharan African universities beyond Nigeria? If common, do such curricula represent genuine cases of liberal education (see page 27-28; Table 1 in APPENDIX D)?
- Does the influence of *colonialism* remain the crux of African HE curricula as previous literature has indicated (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Heleta, 2016; LeGrange, 2016; Mngomezulu & Hadebe, 2018)? Or, do practitioners generally

understand it to be redolent of a bygone era whose sway over curricular work is "minimal presently" (Joel, August 13, 2020)?

- What are the impacts National Forces, and especially the roles of national governments and other "formalized networks" (Boyle, 2019b), on liberal education in other developing countries? Has liberal education received national legitimization anywhere else in Africa or does it remain on the margins of most national HE systems?
- What about the collaborative, rather than "autonomous" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Stark et al., 1997), nature of course planning depicted in the SGS's various Units? Is this unique to UNN or more prevalent, and might it be related to traditional pre-colonial philosophies of education in Africa (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; LeGrange, 2016)?
- What of the other "underrepresented regions" identified by Godwin (2013), namely Latin America and Oceania (p. 196)? Is liberal education truly a peripheral phenomenon in these contexts or are there cases like Nigeria's GSP yet to be described?
- This study explores GS as a curriculum through the perspectives and work of faculty, but other actors and organizations that influenced GS across the domains of institutional administration (e.g., UNN's Vice Chancellor, the Dean of SGS, etc.) and national or transnational policy (e.g., the NUC, USAiad, etc.) were also detected. Additional research on these, and perhaps other entities that impact Nigerian tertiary education (such as the World Bank), has the potential to elucidate the story of GS even further.
- Faculty at times shared subnational or regional aspects of sensemaking, such as the ethnic identity of being "Igbo" (Jacob, August 21, 2019), that did not fit neatly into either the National or Local (i.e., "institutional") dimensions of the glonacal perspective

that guided this study. Additional research on the influences of ethnicity and multiculturalism in Nigeria higher education would be valuable.

Lastly, it is necessary to acknowledge that my findings derive from the application of a specific theoretical framework deployed through the lens of an interpretivist research paradigm informed by Critical Theory (Sipe & Constable, 1996). Other scholars interested in studying GS in Nigeria, or liberal education in Africa more broadly, from a different theoretical stance might well expose disparate through perhaps equally valid "truths." My mentor and dissertation chair, Dr. Kristen Renn, shared an adage about receiving feedback on one's research that bears repeating. Likening my research to a "car," Dr. Renn related: "'I like your *car*' says Reviewer # 1; Reviewer # 2 says 'I like your *car* but it's got some rust'; Reviewer # 3 asks 'why is it not a *horse*?'… So just head off the 'why is it not a *horse*?' people" (K. Renn, personal communication, February 2, 2021). To be clear, my study of GS is about a "car," that is it examines a curriculum and how faculty engage with it through a specific theoretical lens, but if anyone reading this manuscript believes that GS is actually a "horse"—if that is your "truth"—then I implore you to follow up with additional research. You might just be correct.

While a great deal of space in this manuscript has been dedicated to critiquing the extant American literature on global liberal education, the prescriptions for future research I offer here are very much in agreement with suggestions offered by other scholars. Godwin (2013) called for "future institutional or national case studies" to highlight local nuances and substantiate broader patterns (p. 115). Having data to compare from multiple cases can ensure "greater confidence in [overarching] findings" and be "considered akin to… *replication*" in more positivistic, experimental research designs (Yin, 2011, p. 7-8, emphasis in original). Only by conducting further studies of general and liberal education in different contexts can researchers

confidently continue to map out the contours of the global liberal education terrain in ever more holistic and authentic ways.

**Liberal Learning as Pedagogy**

Finally, there are still exciting opportunities for future research at UNN's SGS itself. One topic deserving of further attention is the relationship between the GS curriculum and the practices and modes of teaching and learning, that is the pedagogy, employed in the SGS. Recent American scholarship has asserted that liberal education should be "viewed as a philosophy of education more than a defined curriculum," and liberal educators must attend to "pedagogy" as well as course content (Godwin, 2015a, p. 226, 234-235). The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) concurs, advocating that liberal education is an integrative "approach to undergraduate education [that includes]… teaching and learning practices… shown to be beneficial for all students" (AAC&U, 2020). This contention is consistent with pedagogical concerns raised by my faculty participants during our conversations at UNN.

In the interviews, after wrapping up the curricular questions that were the focus of my protocol (see APPENDIX G), I ended each conversation by opening up the dialog and asking the faculty if there was anything they wished to share with me about GS or their own work that we hadn't covered. During these open-ended portions of the interviews, several faculty members chose to shift from discussions of the curriculum to matters of teaching and pedagogy, such as the SGS' utilization of small seminars and Computer-Based Examinations (CBEs). Regarding seminars, Ben explained,

> The [GS] classes are large. For it to work, you have to have small classes. To… lecture four hundred students, it just doesn't work. So… the students are split into small groups manned by tutors… The concept of tutors is to handle small classes, and the professor

> will come and give the lecture, and the large class will be split into small classes… And the tutor will bring down that massive lecture to the form of a seminar. (August 15, 2019)

Here, Ben is talking about practical pedagogical procedures necessary just to make GS "work" for students. Other faculty members however highlighted more innovative practices in the SGS, especially concerning "going digital" as I discussed on page 110 (JB, August 19, 2019). James relayed that, "here in GS, we… have taken the formal step to apply e-learning in General Studies. That's also one other peculiarity" (James, August 21, 2019). This shift has not remained 'peculiar' to the SGS though, because "the University uses [the SGS] as a 'guinea pig'" to test new practices and modes of teaching, such as the introduction of CBEs (Dyke, August 19, 2020). If these pedagogical experiments are successful, as CBEs were, then the University will often apply such practices in other Faculties, as Dyke confirmed: "today many departments now take CBE exams." Thus, GS faculty view themselves as pedagogical "change agents" (Hill, 2019, p. 13) in their institution as well as curricular actors. That said, my study is concerned with liberal education as a curricular model and I did not explore teaching and pedagogy with my interviewees in an organized or rigorous way. Additional research is needed to flesh out the place of pedagogy in Nigeria's unique model of liberal learning, both at UNN and at other universities.

## Conclusion

The guiding objective of this research was to reconceptualize how liberal education is conceived and studied in new and underexplored global contexts, especially in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa. Heretofore, case studies of liberal education in this region are sparse and oft rely on "expert analysis and perspective" in lieu of theoretically driven empirical inquiry (Godwin, 2013, p. 24). Ergo, I developed a rigorous theoretical framework through which to identify and investigate those forces that drove the adoption of and adaptations to a liberal education

curriculum—General Studies—at one West African university—the University of Nigeria, Nsukka—over time. Furthermore, in order to put these findings in practical context I recruited faculty members from UNN's School of General Studies to share their sensemaking as "curricular change agents" (Hill, 2019) and elucidate the interrelationships between contemporary curricular work and liberal education's unique manifestation in Nigeria.

This study historicized how, rather than liberal education simply being transplanted from the USA to Nigeria, UNN in actuality actively engaged for decades with overlapping and disjointed global, national, and local forces that flowed to, through, and from the SGS to shape the GS curriculum in ways that bely either overt Western-centrism or a lack of agency on the part of Nigerians. In line with my critical approach to this research (Gonzales, 2013), I went step further by bounding this emergent narrative within the "authentic experiential knowledge" of Nigerian GS faculty, rather than just my own 'expert analysis,' to illuminate the how the agency of African liberal educators variably pushes and pulls on glonacal forces in practice (Godwin, 2015a). In doing so, I identified areas requiring additional research to clarify the institutional and national nuances of liberal education in sub-Saharan Africa, and to substantiate which of my findings evoke broader patterns and to what degrees. Nonetheless, I have both provided an expanded framework for contemplating liberal education in underexplored contexts and supplied scholars with an exemplar case of how liberal education, and our discussions of it, can be moved off the margins of international HE.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: AAC&U's Definitions

**Liberal Education:** An approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.

**The Liberal Arts:** Specific disciplines (e.g., the humanities, sciences, arts, and social sciences)

**Liberal Arts College:** A particular institutional type—often small, often residential—that facilitates close interaction between faculty and students, while grounding its curriculum in the liberal arts disciplines.

**Artes Liberales:** Historically, the basis for the modern liberal arts: the trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music).

**General Education:** The part of a liberal education curriculum that is shared by all students, provides broad learning in liberal arts and science disciplines, and forms the basis for the development of important intellectual, civic, and practical capacities. General education can take many forms, and it increasingly includes introductory, advanced, and integrative forms of learning. (AAC&U, n.d.)

APPENDIX B: Theoretical Framework

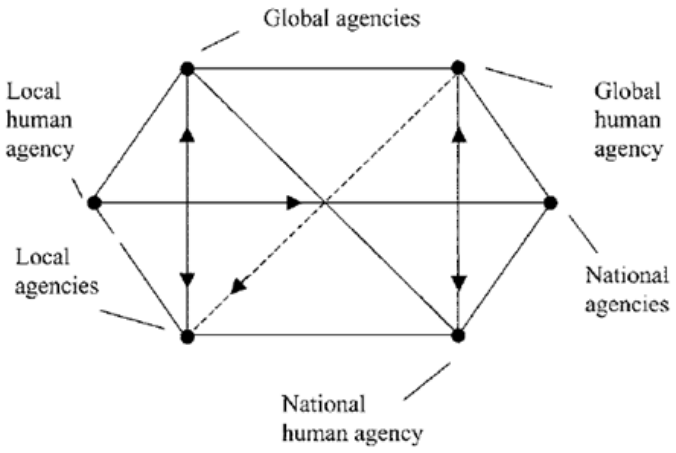


*Figure 1: Glonacal Agency Heuristic.*
Reprinted from Marginson, S., & Rhoades, G. (2002). Beyond national states, markets, and systems of higher education: A glonacal agency heuristic. *Higher education*, *43*(3), 281-309.

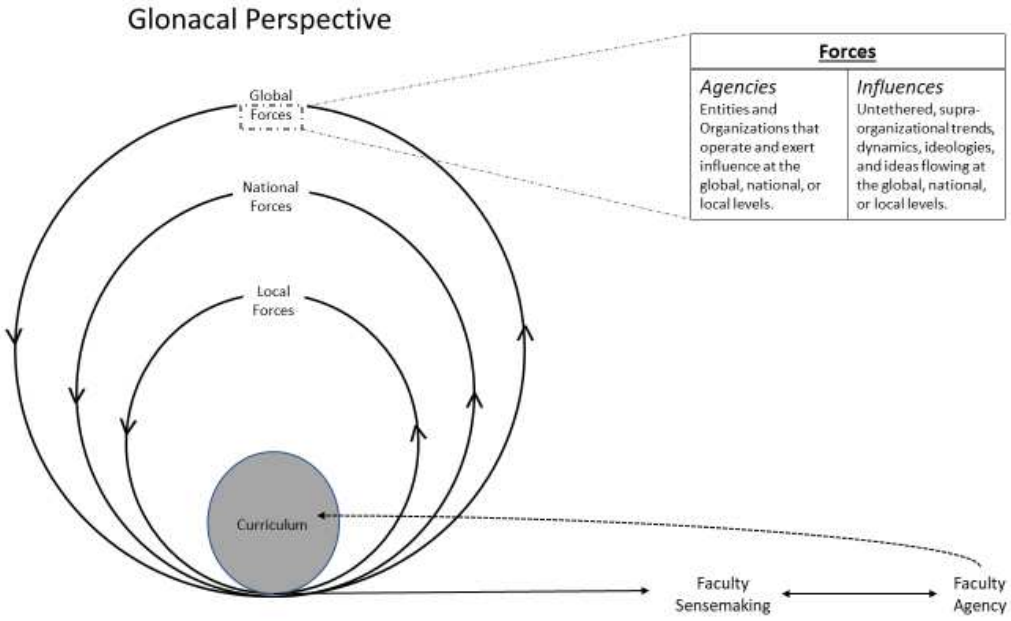


*Figure 2: Theoretical Framework*.
Adapted from Marginson, S., & Rhoades, G. (2002). Beyond national states, markets, and systems of higher education: A glonacal agency heuristic. *Higher education, 43*(3), 281-309.

APPENDIX C: Global Distribution of Liberal Education, Godwin (2013)

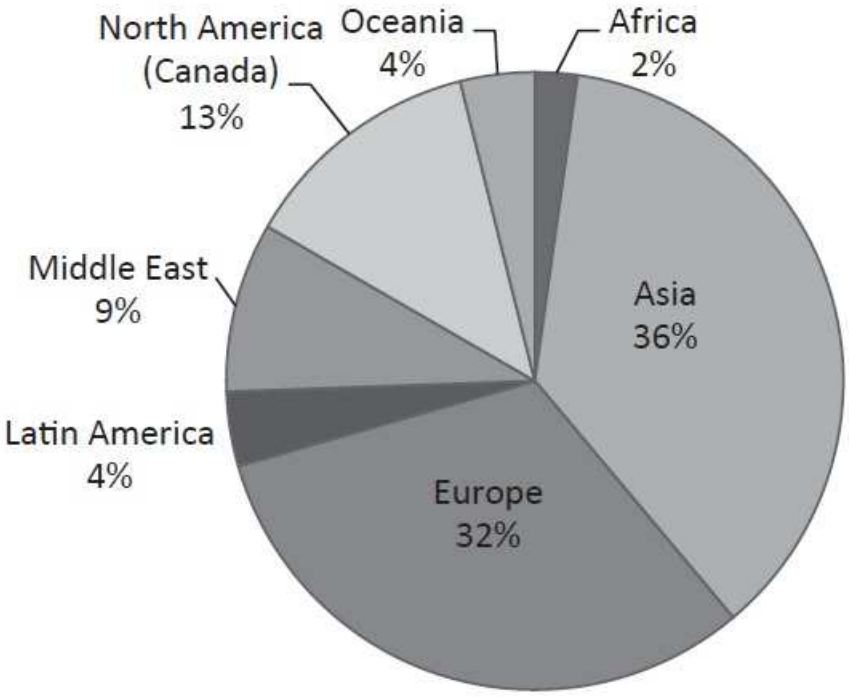


*Figure 3: Distribution of liberal education as a percent of all programs worldwide excluding the United States*.
Reprinted from Godwin, K. A. (2013). *The Global Emergence of Liberal Education: A Comparative and Exploratory Study* (Doctoral dissertation, Boston College, 2013) (pp. 1-350). Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest.

# APPENDIX D: Godwin's (2013) Criteria Analysis

## Table 1:

*Godwin's (2013) Criteria Analysis*

| Criteria | Godwin's Description | Criteria Met by GS at UNN? | Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Self-Idenification | Program self-identifies as "offering a 'liberal education' or being a 'liberal arts' program" (p. 49) | YES | "the GS programme of the University of Nigeria [is] within the frame of liberal higher education" (University of Nigeria, n.d.) |
| **OR** | | | |
| 2. Multi- or Inter-disciplinary | Program must offer "a broad, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary curriculum… that spanned at least two of the social sciences, natural/physical/formal sciences, and humanities areas" (p. 50) | YES | Though the GS curriculum has expanded since its inception, the courses in Humanities, Social Science, and Natural Science remain core components (Nwosu, 2017) |
| 3. General Education | Program must employ its inter- or multi-disciplinary curriculum as part of "'general education'… courses or distribution of courses required for all students" (p. 50) | YES | "the General Studies courses are compulsory for all students. The Use of English courses (GSP 101 & 102) are taken by all undergraduates who then select two other courses depending on their areas of specialization" (Ogenyi & Ngonebu, 2017, p. 57) |
| 4. Emphasis on at least two of the following: | | | |
| i. Transferable skills | "'Transferable skills' such as critical thinking… writing and oral communication… etc." (p. 51) | YES | GS "designed to develop… students' communication and language skills and the power of independent critical thinking" (Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017, p. 13) |
| ii. Social responsibility | "Social responsibility, ethical/moral education" (p. 51) | YES | GS is intended to help students develop into "good citizens and leaders" (Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017, p. 13) |
| iii. Global citizenship | "Global citizenship, intercultural competence" (p. 51) | YES | "General Studies' courses are fundamental for the development of the requisite skills and balanced knowledge in students for effective functioning in a… global society" (Kadiri, Agbo, Otagburuagu, 2017, p. 90) |
| iv. Holoistic student development | "Student-centeredness or holistic student development" (p. 51) | YES | GS offers students an "all-round education" (Otagburuagu & Oloidi, 2017, p. 11) in order to produce "the total man" (p. 13) |

Adapted from Godwin, K. A. (2013). *The Global Emergence of Liberal Education: A Comparative and Exploratory Study* (Doctoral dissertation, Boston College, 2013) (pp. 1-350). Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest.

APPENDIX E: Primary Documents

**Table 2:**

*Key Primary Documents from UNN*

| Document Type | Number (N) | Years Represented |
|---|---|---|
| UNN Prospectus/ Calendar | 13 | 1961-62, 1962-63, 1963-64, 1964-65, 1965-66, 1966-67, 1970-73, 1973-75, 1978-81, 1981-83, 1991-93, 1999-2001, 2004-06 |
| SGS Undergraduate Handbook | 8 | 1992, 1993, 2002, 2004, 2010, 2012-13, 2015-17, 2019 |

**Table 3:**

*Provenance of Primary Documents*

| Document Type | Number (N) | Source Location |
|---|---|---|
| UNN Prospectus/ Calendar | 3 | Nnamdi Azikiwe Library |
| UNN Prospectus/ Calendar | 10 | MSU Library |
| SGS Undergraduate Handbook | 8 | Faculty offices and Dean's suite |

APPENDIX F: Faculty Interviews

**Table 4:**

*Faculty Interviews, UNN 2019*

| Interviewee # | Pseudonym | Unit | Years with SGS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ben | Use of English | 1-10 |
| 2 | Nemo | Use of Library | 10-20 |
| 3 | Edu | Use of English | +20 |
| 4 | JB | Humanities | +20 |
| 5 | Dyke | Social Sciences | +20 |
| 6 | Jacob | Use of English | +20 |
| 7 | Joel | Humanities | 10-20* |
| 8 | Gloria | Natural Sciences | 10-20* |
| 9 | Mary | Natural Sciences | +20 |
| 10 | KK | Natural Sciences | 1-10 |
| 11 | James | Social Sciences | 1-10* |

*2020 follow-up interview and member checking

APPENDIX G: 2019 Interview Protocol & Consent Form

| |
|---|
| Name_____ Title_____ Date_____ |
| Nationality_____ Gender_____ |
| Years in SGS_____ Unit in SGS_____ |
| Education_____ |

Greetings,

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. My name is Bob Cermak and I am a graduate student and researcher at the College of Education at Michigan State University (MSU). I am pursuing a Ph.D. in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education at MSU. My research interests focus on liberal education curricula and how they manifest internationally, especially in Africa. For this reason, I have come to Nsukka in August 2019 to learn about the General Studies (GS) curriculum at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN).

The purpose of this study is to explore how and why (or not) the GS curriculum at the UNN, as the oldest such liberal education program in post-independence Africa, has been adapted and modified over time to better reflect Nigeria's culture as well as to support the evolving domestic and global needs of the Nation and its students. To guide the interview, I have developed some open-ended discussion topics to get us started.

- First, I will ask you to tell me a bit about yourself, your educational background, and your current position in the School of General Studies (SGS).
- Second, I will ask you to share your understanding of GS, its history at UNN and throughout Nigeria, and its purpose(s) and utility in the undergraduate curriculum studied by Nigerian students.
- Third, I will ask you to reflect on how the GS curriculum has been tailored (or not) to fit the unique contexts of Nigeria. I am interested to learn how GS content has changed (or not) over time and what factors (institutional, national, international) have influenced these changes.

Here are some details about the interview: Our discussion will last no longer than 60 minutes from start to finish. I will treat your data with the strictest confidence. I will use a variety of editing and masking techniques to avoid divulging your identity and your colleagues' identities, and I will never use your name or colleagues' names in public reports of the study. Before we begin our interview, I will ask you to provide a pseudonym that is acceptable to you. Despite the care I take to avoid divulging identity, in a study like this, there is always the possibility that your confidentiality might be breached. As we proceed through the interview today, please point out any issues that you may wish to keep "off the record" in published reports. It is important for

me to note that how much you say and what you choose not to say is, of course, up to you. Again, I want to clarify that your participation in this study is completely free and voluntary, and you may refuse to respond to any questions; and you may discontinue with the study at any time.

With your permission, I would like to tape record this interview and take written notes, in order to have a comprehensive record of our conversation. Can you verbally confirm that you give me permission to record our conversation, which details the information that I just reviewed? Please remember that if at any time you would like me to turn off the recorder, please let me know and I will pause or turn off the recorder. Do you have any questions? If at any time in the future you have questions or concerns you can email me at cermakro@msu.edu or call me at +1(517)896-8909.

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**I (the Interviewee) have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.**

**Print Name of Interviewee**_____

**Signature of Interviewee** _____

**Date** _____

APPENDIX H: 2020 Interview Protocol & Memo

SECTION 1: INTODUCTION

*This interview is comprised of two sections. In Section 1, the questions concern how courses in your specific Unit of the School of General Studies are organized and designed, and how you as a faculty member make sense of your GS courses and make curricular decisions as an instructor. You may write your responses in the space below each question on this document. Alternatively, you can send your responses in the body of an email so long as it is clear which responses go with which questions. As you proceed through the interview please feel free to reach out to me for clarification on any questions or concerns you may have at either cermakro@msu.edu or +1-517-896-8909.*

**Section 1a**: Unit-level Course Design and Collaboration

1. Do all instructors in your Unit teach/prioritize the same content in their GS course(s)? Please elaborate.

    a. Do you teach your course(s), and choose their content, individually or in collaboration? Please elaborate.

    b. How much freedom do you have in shaping/choosing the content of your GS course(s)? Please elaborate.

2. Do all instructors in your Unit share the same syllabus?

    a. If so, where does it come from? How is it generated, how often is it updated, who is involved, and why?

    b. If not, how do you go about designing the curriculum and choosing the content for your course(s)? What influences these decisions?

    c. What about your lesson plans, lectures, seminar topics, and exams? How are these produced (individually, collaboratively, etc.)? Please elaborate.

3. Do you teach solely in the SGS or do you also have an appointment in another department/faculty on campus? If you do, how does this influence you as a GS faculty member and your curricular decisions in your GS course(s)?

**Section 1b:** Individual Sensemaking and Agency at the Course-level

1. Last time we spoke, I asked about your academic background and how you came to teach in the School of General Studies. Please share anything else you are comfortable telling me about your personal background. How has your personal history (your community, identity, upbringing, travels, etc.) influenced you as a GS faculty member?

2. What influences how you think about your GS course(s)? How do these influences guide how you address content in your course(s) with your students? Please elaborate and provide examples for all that apply.

    a. Personal influences: examples—Your experiences, background, training, discipline, identity, community, etc.

    b. Unit-level influences: What or who in your unit influences your curricular decisions? How and why?

    c. SGS-level influences: What or who in the SGS influences your curricular decisions? How and why?

    d. UNN-Level influences: What or who at UNN influences your curricular decisions? How and why?

    e. National influences: Who or what at the national level influences your curricular decisions? How and why? (examples: individuals, organizations, priorities, beliefs, etc.)

f. African and Global influences: Are there any influences or influencers at the African or global levels that guide your curricular decisions. If so, what are they, and how and why do they influence you?

g. Historical influences: Are there any historical events, forces, or individuals that influence your curricular decisions? If so, what are they, and how and why do they influence you? (examples: colonialism, UNN/SGS's history, events in post-independence or contemporary Nigeria, etc.)

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

*In section 2 of the interview, I am asking for your feedback on the preliminary findings from my research at UNN last year. As a reminder, last year's interview concerned the forces underlying the GS curriculum's development and adaption at UNN overtime. On the last two pages of this document you will find a memo where I have noted the forces that I identified since we last spoke. Please review this memo to answer the following questions.*

**Section 2**: Feedback on the Forces that Shape the Program-level Curriculum

1. Do you agree (or not) with the Forces that I have identified as having an ongoing impact on the GS curriculum at UNN? Why?

    a. Does my organization of the Forces (i.e. at the Global, National, and Local levels) make sense to you?

2. Do these forces reflect your own perceptions of the curriculum and its change over time? How so?

3. Which Forces (if any) strike you as more (or less) salient? Why?

4. Are there any additional Forces, or influences, that I missed that you think I should add to my findings? Why?

    a. Are there any Forces that you think I should remove from my findings? Why?

b. Are there any Forces that you think I misrepresented and should be changed? If so, how should they be changed?

**Section 2 Memo: Forces that have Influenced the General Studies Programme (GSP) Over Time**

***Global Forces:***

- *Colonialism*: British colonial rule over Nigeria, from the 19th through the mid-20th centuries, provided the original impetus for founding a new indigenous university in Nigeria—the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN)—the same year as national independence. Furthermore, the highly specialized type of tertiary curricula imposed by the British, as at the University of Ibadan, provided the rational for establishing a Nigerian liberal education curriculum—General Studies (GS)—at UNN. It was Dr. Azikiwe and the other founders' palpable dissatisfaction with specialized, colonial education that led to the adoption of both liberal education and the American Land Grant University model in Nsukka.
- *Globalization*: Since independence, the forces of globalization, stemming from ever greater political, economic, technological, and cultural global interconnectedness, have had an ongoing influence on the GS curriculum. Responses to globalization include innovating and adapting transnational education models (i.e. liberal education), disciplines (i.e. Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) in the Social Sciences), content areas (i.e. Climate Change and Its Impacts in the Natural Sciences), and modes of teaching and learning (i.e. e-learning and ICTs). In the globalized higher education sector, UNN, along with the School of General Studies, strives to position itself as a globally competitive institution.
- *Transnational Mobility & Partnerships*: Mobility of individuals across national borders and systems of higher education and collaborations with foreign organizations have impacted the GS curriculum at UNN. Dr. Azikiwe's studies in the United States helped to inspire him to found UNN and to experiment with American-style Land Grant and Liberal Education models. Later in the 1960s, collaborations with foreign advisors (from America and Europe) and partnerships with foreign institutions (like Michigan State University) shaped the early form of GS. Today, most of the School of General Studies' faculty are Nigerians educated in Nigeria, but international collaborations—such as the National Universities Commission's (NUC) partnership with the United Nation's University for Peace to develop the PCS curriculum—continue to influence GS.

***National Forces:***

- *Development & Its Militating Factors*: National development—both civic development (i.e. democratization and national integration) and economic development—in Nigeria has been a dominant theme in GS for decades. Engendering national development, and preparing students to participate in it, has been a goal of each Unit of the SGS. For example, (1) the Use of English strives to provide transferable, work-ready skills, (2)

Nigerian Peoples and Cultures in the Humanities teaches national awareness, (3) PCS in the Social Sciences seeks to lessen intergroup violence, and (4) Agricultural Research in the Natural Sciences aims to strengthen the economy. GS is also concerned with mitigating those factors which militate against national development, such as intergroup (i.e. ethic/religious) violence, terrorism, poverty, government corruption, an undiversified oil-based economy, and a history of military coups.

- *Nigerianization*: Nigerianization is the process by which something is made to be more Nigerian in character. In the GSP, this process has included both recruiting Nigerian staff and highlighting Nigerian content in the curriculum. Nigerianization of the GSP began in the 1960s as Nigerian and expatriate educators collaboratively adapted American-style liberal education to Nigeria's unique context and needs. More recently, the introduction of new courses—such as Nigerian Peoples and Cultures (G.S. 208)—demonstrates the ongoing influence of Nigerianization. The Nigerianization, or nationalization, of the GSP is also linked to the more local processes of indigenization and localization focused on southeastern Nigeria specifically, as evidenced by the inclusion of Igbo Studies in the Humanities Unit.
- *Government & Professional Organizations*: The Nigerian government has exerted a powerful influence on UNN, beginning with the law(s) to establish the university. In the GSP, this governmental influence is especially evident in the NUC's BMAS accreditation standards which recommended (1) Issues in PCS (G.S. 202) in the Social Sciences, (2) Logic, Philosophy and Human Existence (G.S. 207) and Nigerian Peoples and Cultures (G.S. 208) in the Humanities, and (3) Use of Library (G.S. 111) in the Use of English. Beyond the government, UNN's SGS was influential in founding several professional organizations—such as the "National Association of General Studies" and the "Association of General Studies Deans/Directors"—which have in turn influenced GS programmes across Nigeria.

***Local Forces:***

- *Institutional Actors & Administration:* Throughout its history, GS at UNN has been guided by the experiences of its actors and participants. These influences include the history of the Programme's founders and pioneer staff (both Nigerians and expatriates), the experiences of its faculty and leadership, and feedback from its students. Furthermore, the administration of UNN—from the Vice Chancellor and University Senate on down—exerts influence over various aspects of the SGS, including its status (i.e. "Division" vs. "School"), leadership (i.e. appointing the Dean), credit load, and course requirements.
- *Interpersonal Dynamics & Shared Narratives:* Interpersonal and inter-Unit dynamics, including differing interpretations of GS and its courses, influence how faculty teach the curriculum and how it is experienced by students. On the other hand, there are many elements of GS's history at UNN that are widely agreed upon and shape how the Programme views itself and its mission. Such 'shared narratives' include the benefits of the SGS's status as a full-fledged Faculty at UNN with its own core staff; the role played

by the National Civil Service Examination in the 1960s in quieting early criticism of GS; and the growing prominence of ICTs in the School.

APPENDIX I: 2020 Consent Form

Greetings,

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me once again. As a reminder, my name is Bob Cermak and I am a graduate student and researcher at the College of Education at Michigan State University (MSU). I am pursuing a Ph.D. in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education at MSU. My research interests focus on liberal education curricula and how they manifest internationally, especially in Africa. For this reason, I am interested in your insights on the General Studies (GS) curriculum at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN)—the oldest such liberal education program in post-independence Africa.

The purpose of this interview is twofold:

- First, I am interested in how individual GS courses are organized and designed, and how GS faculty, such as yourself, make sense of their own courses and Units. Furthermore, I want to explore how you use this understanding to make curricular decisions as an instructor. Exploring these individual and course-level dynamics will be the focus of the first portion of the interview.
- Second, as we discussed last year, I am interested in the forces underlying the GS curriculum's development and adaption at UNN overtime. I have generated some preliminary findings to address this topic, and in the second portion of the interview I would like to get your feedback on my analysis.

Here are some details about the interview: Our correspondence will take place in writing over email. Once I have received your responses to the questions on the other document attached to this email, I will review them and may reach out to you again with follow-up questions. I will treat your data with the strictest confidence. I will use a variety of editing and masking techniques to avoid divulging your identity and your colleagues' identities, and I will never use your name or colleagues' names in public reports of the study. Despite the care I take to avoid divulging identity, in a study like this, there is always the possibility that your confidentiality might be breached. As you proceed through the interview questions, please point out any issues that you may wish to keep "off the record" in published reports. It is important for me to note that how much you say and what you choose not to say is, of course, up to you. Again, I want to clarify that your participation in this study is completely free and voluntary, and you may refuse to respond to any questions; and you may discontinue with the study at any time.

Do you have any questions?

**Questions:**_____

If at any time in the future you have questions or concerns you can email me at **cermakro@msu.edu** or call me at **+1(517)896-8909**.

---

**I (the Interviewee) have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.**

**Print Name of Interviewee**_____

**Signature of Interviewee*** _____

**Date** _____

* If you are unable to physically sign on the above line, please type you initials. Initialing will constitute your signature for the purposes of this study.

APPENDIX J: GS Curriculum at UNN Overtime

**Table 5:**

*GS Curriculum at UNN Overtime*

| Year (Source) | Use of English | Social Sciences | Natural Sciences | Humanities |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1963/64 (Calendar) | **G.S. 101 The Use of English** (9 credits) *Description*: This course has as its aim the improvement of reading, writing, and speaking, and concerns itself primarily with the development of the English language tools for the interchange of ideas. The student is taught the techniques of expression (style), the mechanics of recording (acceptable grammatical usage) and the means of developing a better standard of judgment, (critical analysis). Special emphasis is placed on the improvement of written and oral transmission and of reading speed and comprehension. (p. 49) | **G.S. 103 Social Science** (15 credits) *Description*: The course is designed to provide each student with an understanding of the scope and character of the disciplines of the social sciences and the relatedness of the knowledge represented by these disciplines. Special emphasis will be placed on the practical application of this knowledge to problems and issues of contemporary man and his social order. Particular reference is made to Nigeria. (p. 49) | **G.S. 105 Natural Science** (12 credits) *Description*: The course traces broadly the history and development of science and considers the more important principles and concepts of the sciences, and the methods of acquiring scientific information. The Objective is to stimulate interest in science, establish the interrelationship between scientific disciplines, and create an awareness of the services of science to man and the effect of science on human society. (p. 49) | **G.S. 207 Humanities** (12 credits) *Description*: The course includes analysis of the chief aspects of culture through exploring the creative action of man in the philosophy, religion, literature, arts and music of the three major cultural aggregates—African, Islamic, and Western—in Nigeria, and seeks to set the whole interrelatedly in historical context. (p. 49) |

**Table 5**
**(cont'd)**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1978/81 (Calendar) | **G.S. 101 The Use of English** (6 credits) *Theme*: Proficiency in the acquisition, communication and critical evaluation of information and ideas through reading, writing and speech. (p. 157) | **G.S. 103 Social Science** (6 credits) *Theme*: Social Development (p. 157) | **G. S. 105 Natural Science** (6 credits) *Theme*: Man and His Environment (p. 158) | **G. S. 207 Humanities** (6 credits) *Theme*: African Cultural Development (p. 159) |
| 1992 (Handbook) | **The Use of English Unit Courses:** G.S. 101 Study Skills (2 credits) G.S. 102 Basic Grammar and Varieties of Writing (2 credits) *Objective and Scope*: The Use of English (G.S. 101/102) is designed to meet the English Language needs of all freshmen in the University… The course has two phases - remedial and developmental. The remedial aspect is intended to achieve a higher level of linguistic appropriateness in the English Language usage of freshmen while the | **Social Sciences Unit Courses:** G.S. 103 Social Sciences I (2 credits) G.S. 104 Social Sciences II (2 credits) *Objective and Scope*: The Social Science General Studies course is designed to enable the students to acquire a broad and general knowledge and understanding of the society and the world in which we live, including the basic analytical tools and methodologies with which the social scientist perceives the world as a scientist and tries to | **Natural Sciences Unit Courses:** G.S. 105 Natural Sciences I (2 credits G.S. 106 Natural Sciences II (2 credits) *Objective and Scope*: The objective of the Natural Science is to stimulate students' interest in science, establish the inter-relationship between scientific disciplines and create an awareness of the services of science to man and the effects of science on human society. (p. 29) | **Humanities Unit Courses:** G.S. 207 Humanities I (2 credits) G.S. 208 Humanities (2 credits) *Objective and Scope*: The course of the Humanities is designed to enable students to understand and internalize ultimate values through the study of the imaginative and creative productions of man in the areas of language, literature, mass communication, music, drama, art, history, philosophy and religion. It also aims at inculcating in the students an appreciation |

**Table 5 (cont'd)**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | developmental phase attempts to equip students with the language skills which they require for effective academic work in the University setting. (p. 24) | recreate it for the benefit of man. (p. 27) | | of the nature and dynamics of cultures in a rapidly changing society, and the ability for sound critical and balanced assessment of events in time perspective. The course also aims at aiding the student in his moral and intellectual growth with a view to equipping him for involvement in the task of meaningful societal development. (p. 30) |
| 2019 (various Handbooks) | **The Use of English Unit Courses:**<br>G.S. 101 Study Skills and Basic Research Methods (2 credits)<br>G.S. 102 Basic Grammar and Varieties of Writing (2 credits)<br>G.S. 111 Use of Library and Basic Research Skills (2 credits)<br>*Description*: The programmes of the Unit have been built on two major pedagogical | **Social Sciences Unit Courses:**<br>G.S. 201 The Social Sciences (2 credits)<br>G.S. 202 Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies (2 credits)<br>*Objectives (G.S. 201)*: This course is aimed at introducing the students to the disciplines in the Social Sciences and this helps in bringing out their anthropocentric nature. Students are taught the | **Natural Sciences Unit Courses:**<br>G.S. 105 Natural Sciences I (2 credits<br>G.S. 106 Natural Sciences II (2 credits)<br>*Objectives*:<br>i. To stimulate students' interest in science,<br>ii. Establish the inter-relationship between the science disciplines,<br>iii. Create an awareness of the | **Humanities Unit Courses:**<br>G.S. 207 Logic, Philosophy and Human existence (2 credits)<br>G.S. 208 Nigerian Peoples and Cultures (2 credits)<br>*Objectives*:<br>i. To make the students come to terms with topical issues in contemporary Nigeria;<br>ii. To improve the critical minds of the students; |

**Table 5**
**(cont'd)**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | approaches. first, there is the remedial approach which attempts to correct the language deficiencies of the fresh men. Second, is the developmental approach which teaches the four language skills for efficient academic purposes.<br>*Objectives (G.S. 101 & 102):*<br>i. To develop in freshmen the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and critical thinking;<br>ii. To equip students with the linguistic and communicative skills which they need to function optimally in the university setting; and<br>iii. To prepare students in the long term to communicate effectively in both spoken and written media in the national as well as international job market. (2019 Handbook, p. 23) | application of the principles of the various disciplines in the Social Sciences to the problems in Nigeria and the world. It is aimed at equipping the students with the ability to apply basic analytical tools and methodologies in the analysis of social structures, relationships and social processes. It also exposes students to the relationship between social sciences as academic disciplines and the General Studies programme as pioneered and sustained by the University of Nigeria. (2019 Handbook, p. 42)<br>*Objectives (G.S. 202)*: The National Universities Commission in collaboration with the University for Peace, an affiliate of the United Nations, recommends this course as part of the | services of science to man<br>iv. Highlight the effects of science on human society and development. (2019 Handbook, p. 48) | iii. To enhance public speech capacity of the students. (2019 Handbook, p. 36) |

**Table 5**
**(cont'd)**

| | |
|---|---|
| *Objectives (G.S. 111)*:<br>a. To remedy the pre-entry deficiencies of the students information literacy skills<br>b. To assist students to develop appropriate critical thinking, evaluative skills and competencies required to grapple with knowledge in their chosen disciplines<br>c. To assist students to acquire the rudiments of research through bibliographic and electronic skills<br>d. To assist students to effectively and efficiently access, evaluate and use library and information resources both in traditional libraries and the internet (2015 Handbook, p. 20) | General Studies programme in all universities in Nigeria. The course is compulsory for all undergraduates of the University irrespective of their specializations. It is designed to expose students to the basic Principles of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) and by so doing contribute to the reduction of intra- and inter- group strifes and promote harmonious co-existence without which sustainable development is impossible. Applicable social-science methods are addressed. Students are taught the theories of peace and conflict and the nature of these as social phenomena. Students are also taught the processes of conflict management, conflict resolution, and the workings of the various |

**Table 5**
**(cont'd)**

| | |
|---|---|
| | agencies involved in these processes in traditional settings and at national and international levels. (2019 Handbook, p. 44) |

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