

The Dearth of Academic Research in Nigeria: An Empirical Study

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We recognized that the progress that has been made in our society has been largely the result of research. This paper examined the factors contributing to the dearth of academic research in Nigeria. The dataset used in this work was collected through a structured questionnaire (n = 50) that was distributed among academic staff at the University of Ilorin. The research questions were analysed using frequency analysis and t-test aided with the use of SPSS for windows 17. The result of the analysis showed that poor funding, poor and inadequate facilities and international exposure has a significant effect on the dearth of academic research in Nigeria at $\alpha = 0.05$. Result also showed that researchers are not well motivated to undergo research. The result of findings has given insights into factors militating against research in general and not to generalize based on the sample size. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that government should increase research funding, improve and provide adequate facilities and researcher should be well encouraged and the need to ensure proper documentation and dissemination of the outcome of research activities conducted in different parts of the country.

Background of Study

Research simply seeks the answer of certain questions, which have not been answered so far, and the answers depend upon human efforts. It may be illustrated by taking an example of the moon. Some years ago man did not know what exactly the moon is? Was this problem which had no solution?

Man could only make some assumptions about it but the man now this time by his efforts, he went to the moon brought the soil of the moon and studied it. The man is now able to give concrete answer of the problem, what is the moon? But the question arises, "Is the answer of the question in examination also research"? The answer is 'no', because the answers of these questions are available. They are available in text-books, class-notes etc. Research answers only those questions of which the answers are not available in literature i.e., in human knowledge. Thus, we can say research seeks the answer only of those questions of which the answers can be given on the basis of available facilities.

Actually research is simply the process of arriving as dependable solution to a problem through the planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Research is the most important process for advancing knowledge for promoting progress and to enable man to relate more effectively to his environment to accomplish his purpose and to resolve his conflicts. Although it is not the only way, it is one of the more effective ways of solving scientific problems.

Research is devoted to find the conditions under which a certain phenomenon occurs and the conditions under which it does not occur in what might appear to be similar circumstances. Our culture puts such a premium on science that the terms science and scientific are frequently misused.

Many agencies claiming to do research are engaged in nothing more than fact-findings. Therefore, research

means to observe the phenomena again and again from different dimensions. For example there are many theories of learning due to the observation from different dimensions. The research is a process of which a person observes the phenomena again and again and collects the data and on the basis of data he draws some conclusions.

The aims and objective of this paper are to:

1. Investigate factors militating against research work in Academic Institutions.
2. Recommend appropriate measures to improve research activities in the state.

Research Questions

This paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the government impacts in Research?
2. What factors are militating against academic research?
3. How adequate is the funding from government to Research in higher Institution of learning?

Literature Review

Research plays a very significant role in various aspects of development nationally and internationally, including the academic development of the higher education community where researches are carried out. Research is an orderly, systematic and insightful search for dependable knowledge. Unlike experience, which deals with events occurring in their own haphazard manner, research is orderly, providing a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. To research is to search again, to take another more careful

look, to find out more, often because something may be problematic with what is already experienced (Selltize, Wrightsman & Cook, 1976).

One key feature in various views of the meaning of research is that, it is directed towards solution to problems or searching for answers to questions. Research, therefore, presupposes the existence of unsatisfactory and questionable state of affairs. The human society is replete with problems and experiences that call for further search and problem solving. To this end the importance of research is invaluable.

Educational research is directed at solving educational problems. As observed by Nworgu (2006), until the 20th century, education as a field of study had not embraced the scientific method in deriving knowledge about educational phenomena or events, but depended on experience or authority. Such a situation could obviously result in accepting inaccurate assertions from well-known authorities in education. Nworgu added that by the beginning of the 20th century, there was a craving for sustaining claims with verifiable information obtained through scientific method of investigation. The method of science is the systematic search for knowledge. It is objective, self-corrective, and consists of some identifiable steps in solving definite problems. Educational research, having adopted the scientific method is, therefore, systematic in approach. Scientific research can be primary or secondary. In primary research, an analysis of large collection of empirical experiences, observations and measurements is undertaken and deduction of facts made from it, while secondary research involves a collection or review of a large number of pieces of knowledge which are often results of a primary research (Nenty, 2001).

The findings of these researches, whether primary or secondary, can provide inputs for policy formulation and implementation. Therefore, to justify the resources sunk into researches by individuals, educational institutions, research institutes, or funding bodies, research quality must

be given serious consideration.

Given the indispensable significance of education in the development of the nations of the world, and Africa in particular, the quality of researches in this important field of enquiry cannot be over-emphasized. As pointed out by Nenty (2001), the extent to which research knowledge is dependable and useful is enhanced if the process of generating information is representative and comprehensive in content and involvement of all research subjects and relevant stakeholders.

Problems Facing Educational Research in Nigeria

One of the major problems militating against scientific research in general and educational research in particular is the complete absence of a clear cut philosophy of national development, a philosophy which should spell out the direction in which Nigeria wants to channel its development efforts, a philosophy that should not change no matter how frequently political power changes hands. With the frequent changes of political power in Nigeria and the attendant instability, inconsistency and incoherence in governmental policies and programmes, the practitioner in the education industry, including the researcher, is left confused. Before the researcher concludes an evaluative study of a particular programme or policy, it is either discarded or replaced with a different, sometimes completely divergent policy or programme. Political instability has also taken its toll on the educational and research institutes in Nigeria.

The academic calendar is frequently disrupted: there are strikes, lockouts, closures and general social upheavals - and all these can influence the orientation, timing, process and quality of any research activity in the field of education.

Similarly, until recently, not much was done to set up appropriate policy making bodies to guide activities in the area of educational research. The ministry of science and technology dates back less than one decade and there is no separate ministry in charge

of higher education. Even the NERDC is a relatively recent creation. And until 1977, no clear-cut policy statement on functional education was evolved. As pointed out in passing earlier, the resources available for research are grossly inadequate just as is the case too in many other African countries. Even when special funds are provided for research, they are too inadequate to meet the research needs of Nigeria.

Consequently, developing African countries still depend on all forms of foreign aid to support research, such as those provided by the U.S.A.I.D. and the U.N.E.S.C.O. The fear and uncertainty in certain quarters today is whether the 20 to 30% funding level accounted for by foreign aid would be maintained, in view of the ongoing restructuring in the global political and economic order, and, especially, in view of the implications of Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth. And there is the rapidly dwindling national economy, which makes it doubtful if Nigeria herself can continue to maintain 70 - 80% share for research and development activities. The problem of inadequate infrastructure dates back to the colonial era and has remained ever since. Today, there is a gross shortage of equipment for experimental research, especially higher education. Surveys are much less demanding by way of back-up equipment, and these are the more common types of research in Nigeria. Research is time consuming and requires full time of total commitment. In Nigeria, the conditions do not permit researchers to be fully committed to their calling. There is economic hardship; people spend long hours on queues to buy fuel into their vehicles; there is general insecurity (of life and tenure of office); researchers are not given due recognition; there is economic depression; systems of transportation and communication are inadequate, and several man hours are lost everyday; there is a general resistance to innovation and change among those who would utilize the theories evolved from extensive research endeavours; record keeping is so inadequate in many institutions that the researcher spends much longer time

retrieving relevant pieces of information.

The proper environment for research is not yet available in Nigeria. A conducive environment is needed for growth and utilization of research. For this to happen, many things have to be considered. These include adequate infrastructure, trained manpower, institutional capacity, and adequate financial support. It also involves motivating the entire population to adopt a science culture as a pattern of life. These and other matters call for the urgent attention of practitioners and policy makers in Nigeria (Jimoh 1998). Another critical factor hindering the desired break through in science and technology beside the issue of improper placement of persons in headship positions is the non utilization of the services of well trained personnels as majority of Nigerian scientist are either out of the country in search of greener pasture, roaming the street/idle or work in organizations where their scientific competences are not useful.

Educational research, and indeed research of all kinds, is almost as old as man on earth. All that has changed over the years is the approach or method(s) employed in particular research activities. The need to carry out investigations and evolve new theories is one of the most fundamental functions of the corps of the intelligentsia of a particular society. Similarly, the place of such research activities in the developmental efforts of any society has also been recognized. This is why special attention has been paid to research and documentation by countries that have been eager to develop technologically. For instance, according to Nkwi (1992, p. 35), following the Meiji Restoration in 1968, the Emperor of Japan was required to take five oaths, one of which stated that "knowledge will be sought and acquired from any source with all the means at our disposal, for the greatness and security of Japan". Today, Japan is a great and powerful industrial nation (Jimoh 1998).

Methodology

The instrument was pre-tested with Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.76. The data was analyzed using frequency analysis and t-test with the use of SPSS 17. The result of the analysis is shown in the tables below:

Table 1. Hierarchy

Status	Frequency	Percentage %
Professor	15	30
Reader/Associate Professor	20	40
Senior Lecturer	15	30
Total	50	100

Interpretation

From the table 2, 30% of the respondents Professor; 40% of the respondents were Reader or Associate Professors while 30% of the respondents are Senior Lecturers.

Table 2. Level of Experience in Research

Experience	Frequency	Percentage %
5 - 10 years	10	20
11-20 years	35	70
Above 20 years	5	10
Total	50	100

From table 3, it showed that 20% of the respondent of the respondent has between 5 – 10 years experience in research, 70% has between 11-20 years while 10% of the respondents have above 20 years of experiences in research

Table 3. Deficiency in Research can be attributed to poor funding

Scale	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly disagreed	2	4
Disagreed	3	6
Undecided	-	-
Strongly agreed	35	70
Agreed	10	20
Total	50	100

It showed that 70% of the respondent strongly agreed with the statement, 20% agreed, while little percentage of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Thus, majority of the respondent agreed that deficiency in research can be attributed to poor funding.

Table 4. Are Researchers well motivated?

Scale	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly disagreed	-	-
Disagreed	3	6
Undecided	10	20
Strongly agreed	2	4
Agreed	35	70
Total	50	100

Table 5. Poor and inadequate laboratory and equipment contributed to poor research work in Nigeria

Scale	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly disagreed	-	-
Disagreed	12	24
Undecided	8	16
Strongly agreed	10	20
Agreed	20	40
Total	50	100

Table 5 showed that 70% of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 6% disagreed, 20% undecided, 40% strongly agreed. Thus, it showed that majority of the respondents agreed that researchers are well motivated to carry out research work.

Interpretation

From the Table 6, 40% of the respondent agreed, 20% strongly agreed, 16% undecided while 24% disagree since 40% of the sample size agreed, it indicate that poor and inadequate laboratory and equipment has contributed to poor research in Kwara State.

Table 6. Result of the t-test

Coefficients ^a		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	-984.281	623.403		-1.579	.115
	Poor Funding	122.495	90.268	.055	1.357	.003
1	Inadequate Infra.	-65.759	34.118	.079	1.927	.044
	Poor Motivation	19.725	57.751	-.031	-.759	.048
	Political Instability	2.145	3.060	.023	.582	.001

The result showed that poor funding, inadequate infrastructures and Political instability has a significant effect (i.e. contributing factors) to poor research in Nigeria at, $p < 0.05$.

Recommendations

The proper environment for research is not yet available in Nigeria. A conducive environment is needed for growth and utilization of research. For this to happen, many things have to be considered. These include adequate infrastructure, trained manpower, institutional capacity, and adequate financial support. It also involves motivating the entire population to adopt a science culture as a pattern of life. These and other matters call for the urgent attention of practitioners and policy makers Nigeria. It recommended that government should increase research funding, improve and provide adequate facilities and researcher should be well encouraged and the need to ensure proper documentation and dissemination of the outcome of research activities conducted in different parts of the country.

Conclusion

This present study has given insights into the present state of research in

Nigeria and has identified some factors militating against educational research in Nigeria. The place of this study is not to make a generalization (with low sample size) but to have understanding into the state of educational research in Nigeria. ■



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