

ABUSE OF STUDENTS TRAINING FOR RESEARCH IN NIGERIAN HIGHER INSTITUTION OF LEARNING: AN INSIGHT A STUDY USING NYSC GRADUATES IN IKEDURU L.G.A

Rev. Dr. A. C. Egereonu

Abstract

The essence of this work is to investigate the abuses by students in training in project research writing with their evaluators in higher institutions. It involved 50 National Youth Service Corp Graduates out of 1000 graduates posted to Imo State. Sampling was convenient. Three research question and a hypothesis were used. Instrument was the Questionnaire and findings from responses showed that 46% of the sample agreed that projects are written for students through the research questions. For the Hypothesis testing, Cal-value of $19 > 11.34$ table value and $19 \text{ Cal} > 7.80$ Table-value at 95% and 99% probability level respectively showed the existence of project malpractice by students. Recommendations were made for all institutions to reverse the malaise.

Introduction

The essence of research in project writing acceptable by all globally is firstly, to know the errors of the past, the current happenings, to be able to predict the future in order to solve numerous problems facing society and reduce stress, suffering, diseases etc. Any error in this process can create untold hardship such as plane crashes, examination failures, collapse of building, square pegs in round holes, poor staffing of teachers, and a deceptive growth and developmental pattern that can sooner or later ruin nations, and cause armed conflicts.

If all predictions are subject to errors, which will be determined by events taking place in the future, where we have little or no control, one can imagine the dangers in false prediction.

Taking the above into consideration, one becomes uncomfortable with anxiety over recent events in higher institutions, where observations are replete with project writing mal practices, examination malpractices, including abuse of research process, through mercenaries writing for others, bribing supervisors etc.

The National Policy of Education from inception highlighted objectives of tertiary education in Nigeria some of these are:

- a. to contribute to national development through high level in teaching, research, development generation & dissemination of knowledge.
- b. University research shall be relevant to the nations development goals.
- c. Students are to undertake projects/action research while institution disseminate research results to both government & industries for proper utilization.

The research project be comes naturally very relevant to a specific point for development & prediction for future advancement.

To make these objectives realizable, Okafor (1994) explained that these goals had been enshrined in the curriculum for all levels of the tertiary education that undertakes research work. Such project must be presented for defence to show validity and credibility of the measurement as a prerequisite for graduation. Such research work during evaluation at this level, will aim at assessing

their contributions to knowledge/answer to problems facing various fields of learning. Otuka (2001) alleged that many students & supervisors believe that quality of research reports in Nigeria Tertiary Institution have continued to worsen with the passage of time. Some researchers disagreed with these allegations like Namuddu (1991) according to Olatunji (2008).

But Nwosu Izuwah (1996) writing on examination malpractice observed that it is a most shameful form of fraudulent and corrupt practice in Nigeria and most dangerous in social academics ills, because of its capacity to destroy the foundation of human & national development.

Unfortunately this practice has spilled over to project-writing. Unless a bad behaviours is stifled on time according to psychologists, it grows and will be motivated by the previous reinforcements, until it ultimately matures for development or destruction.

As the researcher said earlier, if the future cannot be perfectly predicted, due to vagaries in human nature, natural and natural occurrences, negative facts in the research process like ignorance, competition, abuses of research process, will worsen the situation for development and prediction in all sectors of human endeavour.

Researcher should not plan with faulty statistical inferences from poor unreliable premises. Such inferences are not credible. As Nwana (1996:3); succinctly puts it

In Nigeria sectors, where things change so fast (be they policy studies, implementation protocols, government operations the environment and natural resources etc), a forecast of the future may will be an exercise in futility.

Yet we have to research and plan for the future. In dicing this all projects & papers presented must undergo perfect evaluation, and criticisms, to save our future from demise and relapse into non-creativity, non-and false predictions which although quantified and statistically analyzed, could be unreliable, not credible and mentally stressful.

An insight into the definition of research project malpractice can be “culled” from the definition of examination malpractice from academic regulations of Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education Brochure. According to Nwosu-Izuwah (1996). A former staff of the college;

This is”an act intended to benefit or give undue a advantage to oneself in fraud, before and during or after an examination” (p 238).

At times before presenting for defence, projects can be written by others or bribe supervisors & panelist or it can exist after defence, while awaiting results.

Statement of the Problem

The argument about falling of standards of Education in Nigeria has taken new dimensions from examination malpractices to research project malpractices, involving almost all personnel including most Teachers high or low in status.

For example it is alleged that some supervisor write projects for students while some mercenaries are employed to write for students, such that students cannot properly defend their projects. Those who can are clever to do this by reading and cramming such projects.

The most disarming aspects is the involvement of the evaluator not only in panels for defence external examinations. Although this is not rampart from evidence. Such malpractice has stifled growth, creativity & development and prevents prediction for sustainable development.

Purpose of Study

The objective of this paper is to highlight the many aspects of project malpractice in research practice in higher institutions in Nigeria and suggest ways to curb the trend to prevent faulty inferences for development.

Review of Related Literature

One cannot hypothesize the existence of examination malpractices, because from all intents and purposes and in most countries, schools examination malpractices is replete. The newest trend is project malpractice, from preparation, writing, marking to defence.

This negates the objectives of research. According to Ivowi (1999), educational research is any activity involving information gathering and analysis, aimed at reaching a better understanding of, or finding solutions to educational problem. While research in the area of pedagogy testing and evaluation of projects would continue to reveal the aptness of project writings vis-à-vis reports, any abuse of this process leaves the society agape with incredible and uncertainty of the future, since research is meant to predict the future for next line of action and to pre-empt pit falls and inundations.

Ogomaka (2004) expressed fear that the extent to which research works are conscientiously done are below expectations, while Udofia (1975) observes that students are not researching properly because observation shows that their project works are uncoordinated with poor understanding of what constitutes research and lack proper supervision of lecturers.

The aim of research is to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, desire to solve a societal problem and improve the lots of the people by predicting the future. Bajah (1990) observed that over 80% of researches in Nigeria are conducted to earn higher degrees or promotion, and not necessarily motivated by the desire to solve a societal/educational problem.

The motivating factor is money for personal gains, not improving society. (Abgrev & Nkuma 1996).

Further an empirical study by Ibe (2008) on "Assessment of B. Ed projects in AIFCE" revealed vividly that 83.6% of the projects did not apply adequately and appropriately statistical methods in analyzing data. Thus such projects within that period cannot provide solution to problems. This is an abuse of research procedure. When students cannot do statistics they tend to copy.

Olatunji and Olatunji (2008) wrote on "Assessment of first degree research projects in Faculty of Education, Abia State University, using Sandwich Project Students for study. Findings revealed that 22% of sampled projects topics, were ambiguous and did not address variables that can be measured easily. They further found out that 12.1% of the research topic were duplication of already existing work that were resubmitted to same supervisors or other supervisors. Other findings are that their scores ranging between (60-100) percent were suspect or unreliable because they appear to be largely subjective, even as the methodology, data analysis, technique, and other aspects of the project left much to be desired.

Research Questions

1. Are students research projects written by others?
2. Do students copy other peoples research projects?
3. Do students bribe project Evaluator?

Hypothesis “Ho”

There are no significant differences between students abuse of research project writing and project evaluation malpractice in Higher Institutions of learning.

Population/Sample and Sampling Techniques

This consisted of 50 (fifty) NYSC National Youth Service Corps Graduates out of over 1000 cutting a cross 33 Universities, Polytechnic, & College of Education posted to Imo State at Ikeduru L.G.A. Convenient sampling technique, as done with those at Ikeduru L.G.A to save time, finance & stress.

Instrument

The instrument used was a structured questionnaire constructed by the researcher containing nine statements representing the research questions and hypothesis of the study. The scale of measurement was interval scale using a modified likert scale of 4 continuum SA, A, D, SD representing 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively ie Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree which will be collapsed into A&D (Agree and Disagree).

Using the Split-half Formular and Peason-r correlation coefficient, the reliability of the instrument is 0.77 (high).

The researcher is in the field of Measurement & Evaluation, yet consulted another expert who validated the instrument for content validity & reliability.

Presentation & Analysis Data

Data collected & collated were put into frequencies then analysed using χ^2 (Chi-Square) of Goodness of Fit, a non-parametric statistics. Below are analysis of results.

Probability conditions

P<0.05 99% confidence levels

P<0.01 91% confidence levels

Degrees of freedom = 3

Table 1 R.Q and Collapsed Interval Scale

S/NO	Research Questions	SA	SD	Σ Total
I	Projects written by others	49 (33%)	10 (77%)	150 100%
II	Copying of projects by students	56 (56%)	44 (44%)	100 100%
III	Bribery to evaluators	81 42.6%)	109 (57.4%)	190 100%

Note: Subscripts represent percentages

Σ - Sum

Table 11: Hypothesis

No significant differences between students abuse of research project writing and project evaluation malpractice in higher institutions of learning.

Table 11 χ^2 Square Analysis table

S/N	Questionnaires items	X ² Cal.	Table values P< 0.01	Table value P<0.05	Accept/reject
1	Lecturers fully write projects for students (100%)	31.9	11.34	7.8	(Reject)
2	Lecturers assist in writing projects for students	18.6	11.34	7.8	(Reject)
3	Mercenaries are writing projects for students	27.45	11.34	7.8	(Reject)
4	Students copy other peoples question verbatim.	18.50	11.34	7.8	(Reject)
5	Students at times change the structure of projects to look like their own only	14.30	11.34	7.8	(Reject)
6	The Bribe evaluations at times	1.85	11.34	7.8	(Accept)
7	External examiners influence at times	17.82	11.34	7.8	(Reject)
8	Supervisors at times seek carnal/sexual favours	15.10	11.34	7.8	(Reject)
9	Supervisors are too demanding before reading files.	14.50	11.34	7.8	(Reject)

$\Sigma=170.02$

No = 9 = 19 > 11.34 > 7.8

Discussion

See table 1 (R.Q & Collapsed Interval Scale)

From the three research questions respectively: 49 (33%); 56 (56%)& 81 (42.6%) in the table, all respondents agreed to the existence of project writing by others, copying and bribery in higher institutions.

From table II on Hypothesis testing, we observe that calculated value is 19, while table value is 11.34 for P<0.01, and 7.80 for P<0.05 respectively, at 99% and 95% confidence level respectively. We then reject the hypothesis and accept the alternative.

Inferences can be made that project malpractices exist in a sizeable proportion, when such should not exist, realizing the importance of research for development and prediction. Olatunji & Olatunji (2008) supported by Ibe (2008) and others revealed, such painful existence. Further Olatunji explained that 12.1% of sandwich students duplicated projects, while 60% of their scores are subjective and not credible.

Conclusion

From the data analyzed, literature reviews and observation, have proved that, project malpractices have joined exam-malpractices in gaining momentum in all institutions, within students, and lecturers, except some panel of examiners, where you cannot bribe everyone. Such malpractice exist by copying projects of others, changing structure of projects, mercenary in some and bribery of evaluators. The research question and hypothesis attest to these anomalies.

Recommendation

1. Positive steps by all institutions concerned with evaluation of research projects must make sure that the process of must be followed, from the inceptions of the topic, that should be evaluated, following the APA style process guidelines currently and should apply supervisory techniques to measure variables for credibility proper prediction and rational inferences for future generations by avoiding lapses, corruption, abuse, malpractices & ignorance.
2. Evaluating all steps. In the process to final stage of defence, without negative collaboration by project evaluators, checked by a seasoned evaluator.
3. Retraining all staff concerned through workshop & seminar for knowledge acquisition by all institution.
4. A punitive/corrective measures should apply for lapses by any teacher and student.

References

- Aliyu B.M, Yallams S.M & Ndahi W.S. (1996) Examining factors responsible for deteriorating quality in research & publication activities and their impact among academic staff of Nigeria higher institution. (Nsukka Association for Promotion Quality Education Nigeria Publication. Edited by Emenogu BC (1).9.
- Abgrevo M.N & Nkuma O. (1996). Problems and challenges of education research for sustainable development (The Nig. Experience Nsukka. 9 Association for Promotion Quality Education Nigeria Publication.
- Higan T.E (1996) *Research in education*. (Its values & Problem) Nsukka/Enugu. An association for promotion quality education Nigeria publication in...book of readings edited by Emenogu BC 9.
- Ibe N. (2008). An Assessment of B.Ed Prospects in AIFCE Owerri. Ile-Ife Pub. by *Nigeria Journal of Educational Research & Evaluation*. 8.
- Nwana O. C. In the year 2000 and after (1996) In quality research in primary education. Nsukka Association for Promotion Quality Education Nigeria Publication 9.
- Nwosu-Izunwah L.U. ((1996) Examination malpractice for research in quality education. An Association for Promotion Quality Education Nigeria Publication Enugu. 9.
- Okafor F.C (1976). *Research and Professionalism in Education* (Nsukka) An Association for Promotion Quality Education Nigeria Publication in Research in Qty Edu. Book of Readings_9.

Reliability Coefficient

Formula of Product Moment Correlation Coefficient

$$r = \frac{\Sigma D \times dy}{N (Sdx) (Sdy)}$$

Where $\Sigma D \times Dy = 83$

$N = 25$ $SDx = 9.2$

$SDy = 9.6$

$r_{1/2} = 0.04$

$$r = \frac{2r_{1/2}}{1+r_{1/2}}$$

$$r = \frac{2 \times 0.04}{1+0.04} = 0.77$$