

RESEARCH AND INNOVATIONS IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND LITERARY STUDIES

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Abstract

This paper identifies and discusses vital role research and innovation plays in enriching our education. It also highlights the importance of language in carrying out these educational activities in our schools and characteristics of language were equally mentioned. The paper also highlights what research and innovation entails. It also stresses the relationship that exists between language and literature. Educational function in the society was not left out. The relationship between language and literary genres are equally emphasized, and their functions. The meaning and relevance of education was also stressed.

Keywords: Research, Innovation, Language, Education, Literature and Genres of Literature.

The quest to discover educational problems and to seek for possible solution in research and innovation is what spurs this work. Educational research can be said to be a variety of methods, in which individuals evaluate different aspects of education including; student learning, teaching methods, teacher training, and classroom dynamics" Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Innovation at the same time can be said to be the process of making changes to something established by introducing something new; it applies to "... radical or incremental changes to products, processes or services" some years back, there have been many innovations (changes) in the educational design in many part of the world. People

are engaged in various researches concerning many problems that are facing their countries which differ from one country to another. Today one cannot fail to mention the significant role science and technology through innovation derive desired change. There are immense possibilities for greater and wider-spread with the use of present day technological advancements, as well as with the implementation of innovative education programs. The challenge is to ensure that innovation plays a constructive role in improving educational opportunities for billions of people who remain under-served in a rapidly developing world. Holmes

(1992:71) asserts that language is an important component of identity and culture for many groups maintaining their district identify and culture is usually important to members self-esteem. She further claims that language is a very important form of human symbolic behavior and key components for any individual as well as a group's social identify.

In the same vein, Ehiakhamen (2001) opines that "language is the principle of creativity and destruction". Thus, the study of language would show how people live, interpret reality, as well as evaluate their institutions. "Literature is a slice of life that has been given direction and meaning, an artistic interpretation of the world".

What is Research?

Leedy (1997) defines research as the systematic process of collecting and analyzing information (data) in order to increase understanding of the phenomenon with which we are concerned or interested. Leedy goes to state what research is not and the characteristics of research as follows:

- i. Research is not mere information gathering
- ii. Research is not mere transformation of facts from one location to another
- iii. Research is not merely rummaging for information and
- iv. Research is not a catchword used to get information.

In the same vein, Olaofe (2010) contends that research involves finding solutions to

problems, exploring an idea, probing an issue, accepting or rejecting an assumption, concept, point of view or an argument, by gathering data and materials beyond our personal intuitions and experiences. He further viewed that the results, findings, conclusions, and generalizations emanating from such investigations should follow what is referred to as scientific or empirical procedures. Research is also said to be a "careful and detailed study into a specific problem, concern, or issue using the scientific method.

Best and Kahn also define research (1995) as the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations that may lead to the development of generalizations, principles or theories, resulting in prediction and possibly ultimate control of events.

Research can be about anything, and we hear about all different types of research that people want to investigate for example breakthrough from sickle cell anemia, Baby born with HIV cured, cancer drug discovered etc. Each of these begin with an issue or problem (such as Sickle cell or HIV), and they had a question, like does medication cure sickle cell or reduce cancerous tissue on HIV infection?

In education, there are varieties of disciplines which are each present to some degree in educational research. These include psychology, anthropology, and sociology, General study and philosophy etc. The overlap in disciplines creates a

broad range from which methodology can be drawn.

Types of Research

According to Creswell (1994), educational research can be classified into two broad areas namely: quantitative and qualitative research. Leedy (1995) defines qualitative research as "an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables measured with members and analyzed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the productive generalizations of the theory hold true". He defines qualitative study as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.

The Different Types of Research are stated below:

Action research: A type of applied research that focuses on finding a solution to local problem in a local setting.

Case and field study research: A type of qualitative research in which data are gathered directly from individuals or social or community groups in their natural environment for the purpose of studying interactions, attitudes or characteristics of individuals or groups.

Correlation Research: A statistical investigation of the relationship between one factor and one or more other factors. Correlation research looks at surface relationships but does not necessarily

probe for causal reasons underlying them.

Descriptive survey or Normative survey: The survey method is used to describe the incidence, frequency and distribution of certain characteristics of a population.

Ethnography: A type of qualitative inquiry that involves an in-depth study of an intact cultural group in a natural setting.

Ex-post facto or evaluation research: This method observes existing causal comparative research and searches back through the data for plausible causal factors.

Grounded theory research: Qualitative research studies aimed at deriving theory through the use of multiple stages of data collection and interpretation.

Historical research: The attempt to solve certain problems arising out of historical context through gathering and examining relevant data.

Reasons for Research

Olaofe (2010) suggest the reasons for conducting and writing research as follows:

That one undertakes a research possibly because of the interest in finding out something or solving a problem of high interest. Again that personal rewards which one may get by computing a degree, a journal article or a commissioned research work. That reward may be in form of a degree, promotion or other career enhancement, financial award, and so on.

Furthermore, He said that communities or nations may change for better through your research effort. Knowledge one

produces may contribute to solving a perennial problem, changing people's lives for better, adding benefit to your work, your social life, and so on. Again, for increasing our academic horizon; that knowledge is bound to increase as we engage in active research. We get to know new things, ideas, more about this life and our surrounding through our research effort.

Characteristics of Research

- i) Research emphasizes the development of generalizations, principles or theories that will be helpful in predicting future occurrences.
- ii) Research is based upon observable experience or empirical evidence.
- iii) Research demands accurate observation and description.
- iv) Research involves gathering new data from primary or firsthand success or using existing data for a new purpose.
- v) Research is often characterized by carefully designed procedures that apply rigorous analysis.
- vi) Research requires expertise.
- vii) Research strives to be objective and logical, applying every possible test to validate the procedures employed, the data collected and the conclusions reached.
- viii) Research involves the quest for answers to unresolved problems.
- ix) Research is characterized by patient and unhurried activity.
- x) Research is carefully recorded and reported.
- xi) Research sometimes requires courage.

What Is Innovation?

Innovation generally refers to changing processes or creating more effective processes, products and ideas. It can also be defined as "the process of making changes to something established by introducing something new". Today, one cannot mention technology without innovation coming to mind. This is because technology is a vital driver behind changes and sometimes plays significant role in innovations, educational design and delivery. There are immense possibilities for greater and wider-spread change with the use in present-day technological advancements, as well as with the implementation of innovative educational programs. The challenges are to ensure that innovation plays a constructive role in improving educational opportunities for millions of people who are looking forward for development. Technologies are available in most countries of the world. These technologies can increase the potential to support both learners and educators and this can help remove the barriers of time and distance experienced by the participants. New information and communication technologies (ICTs) do not replace the need for good educational design and delivery.

Reasons for Innovation

Innovation can spur up due to Learner-Centered Education. The question here is how can innovation and technology offset the barriers of access and mobility that has been a deterrent to education in many parts of the developing world? This is not far-fetched because with the

emergence of smart phones, e-Book readers, 'podcasts' and 'vodcasts', internet and how-cast computers, as well as solar electricity, cell phone access, and other technologies, comes the opportunity to provide education to assist individuals and communities in places under-served by traditional education institutes. Technology and other innovations enable educational design and delivery to be adapted to the needs and environment of students enrolled in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and traditional educational programmes.

Driven Approach to Innovation

The focus must be attainment of educational goals and objective. This objective must be the developmental objective, not on polarizing technical gadgets. However, learners have demonstrated the ability to gain technical proficiency in a variety of software, hardware, and other information and communication technologies (ICTs). How can education assimilate this into programme design and delivery in order to improve efficiency, control costs, and expand delivery of education to larger numbers of people? How will the convergence of communication technologies affect the potentials for providing improved learner support? In an environment in which the postal system is slow or unreliable tradition, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) can face challenges in programme delivery. Today, internet and emails have enabled changes in the design and delivery of ODL in many parts of the world. In many places,

cell phones are wide-spread in use, and text messaging is popular for work and personal communication, yet few institutions have adopted this tool.

Here are some innovative educational questions that one may ponder on when embracing on educational innovations.

a) What alternatives do institutions have? If they are unlikely to be connected to a reliable electricity service in the future; and

b) If computers are to be installed in institutions; what processes are under way to ensure full training and support for teachers and learners to effectively integrate these into the teaching learning and school management processes?

c) What processes are needed to provide electricity and broadband access for all educational institutions e.g. primary schools, colleges and universities?

d) What processes are needed to provide broadband access to all lifelong learners (adults who can afford reasonable rates for access)?

e) What are the innovations in education that can help meet the three million people challenge?

The solution for the above mentioned points is providing education in new and unconventional ways. It is through innovation that we can meet the challenges of improved efficiencies, lower costs, increasing accessibility and greater success in achieving development goals through education.

What is Language?

Language is a very important form of human symbolic behaviour and a

key component for any individual as well as a group's social identity. Coupland and Jaworki (1997) are of the view that frank effort must be made to preserve language and its integrity, purity and originality. This is because of the vital role language plays in uniting communities. Ochege and Shittu (2008) claims that language is the crucial mediator in communicating and constructing our ideas about the society, they further agree that there is the need for wanting to communicate one thing or the other from one person to another; a well celebrated party, business transaction, gathering of kinsmen, political party meeting etc.

Language sets people apart from all other creatures. Every known human society has had a language which they use for passing across information, ideas, knowledge, value etc. It is a well organized language from other animals. No wonder, Ehiakhamen (2001) posits that the study of language would show how people live, interpret reality as well as evaluate their institutions.

Characteristics of Language

Ochege and Shittu (2008) classified the properties of human language as follows:

- (i) A living language is one that is in current usage for communication and social cooperation either or within a particular speech community
- (ii) Another property of language is the arbitrariness of the symbols
- (iii) Human language is subject to change
- (iv) Human language initially uses the patterns of sound along with description of

gestures and intonations crucial to comprehension

- (v) Human language is systematic
- (vi) Human language is symbolic

Functions of Language

Language plays a very vital role in human lives. It is a social phenomenon. One of the major roles language plays is that of communication for people to understand and to act upon. Ochege and Shittu (2008), contend that every human being use language basically for communication. They further said that it is language that provides the available and categories with which we think and upon which we act as the bridge between others and ourselves.

Human cultures are transmitted through language. It is with language that people transmit their culture from the total lives of a particular group or society.

Meaning that if actually the people want the continuous existence of their cultures, they must keep the language. Holmes (1992) posits that language is an important component of identity and culture for many groups, maintaining their distinct identity and culture. Language is directive.

Human beings wish to influence the behaviour of others. The most straightforward instances are that of directives, commands and requests. This shows how human language can be used for expressive function and at the same time achieve meanings particularly affective and connotative meaning.

Language performs referential role. In this situation, past events are not

totally forgotten we always refer back to past actions. This is because there is this characteristic of a language that makes it possible for human beings to discuss events that took place very longtime ago. Language performs such important function. It is used for writing novels, stories, songs, lullabies, letter etc. In doing so the writer makes use of the medium in expressing his thought, ideas, knowledge, values to his audience.

What is Literature?

Olaofe (1998) opines that a good literature is an authentic mirror image of its society and time. He further claims that literature is a record of things happening around us". Literature as a depiction of man in his environment, can be said to entail most of man activities, man's language, culture, values aesthetic. Every literary work tells us about man and his environment, his action which has always being depicted social, political, economic etc. has always be the concern of literature, it is the reflection or the mirror through which the society sees.

Ayoola (2006) observes that literature encompasses all written and unwritten compositions that contain information about the culture, history, and way of life and literary expression of a people. He further states that the term is used to embrace mainly words that express emotions in a unique style and beauty of expression.

Functions of Literature

1) **Preservation of culture and interactive mirror of life:-** It expresses

both the pleasant and unpleasant experiences to a people. It employs the imagination and the resources of language to present important facts of life.

2) **Preservation of culture:-** In this situation, literary genres are used to show case the cultural belief of some group of people. A good example of this, Chinua Achebe *Things fall apart*, Aliyu Kamal *women without border*, Zainab Alikali *Still born* and Rotimi *The god are not to blame*. Nigerian cultures were explicitly show cased in the mentioned texts.

3) **Didactic:-** Literature uses its themes to teach morals values to its audience. Examples are laziness, brevity, fearlessness, honesty, faithfulness and love etc. These themes can be found in the above mentioned novels.

4) Literature can at the same time serves as a tool for social change. A good example of these are *Animal farm* by Gorge Orwell; *Walk m the night* by Alex Guma, *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens where literature were used as a weapon for fighting and struggling for freedom in South Africa which was later won. The winning brought about the change which they clamour for

5) **Window to the world:-** literary texts expose the readers to outside world, experiences, culture etc. We are no longer in the dark because through reading, realities and ways of life, which include occupations, climate, race and language, dressing, family life, etc. we are better informed on most issues around us and globally.

6) **Entertainment:-** one cannot talk about entertainment and without mention

in literature. Literature entertains and the same time educates us, as we read interesting prose, poetry or drama texts we are being entertained and the same time being educated through messages that is passing across. Reading of literary texts improves our communication skills. Through reading of literary texts, students are exposed to unfamiliar words, idioms, and their current usage, develop healthy reading habit which will enhance his manipulating of language and develop competence in the reading.

What is the Relationship between Language and Literature?

Literature provides students with abundance of knowledge through the reading of literary texts and language they are very exposed to things they will have not known ordinarily. The student develops a better feeling for the language and improves his overall proficiency on it through reading literature. Therefore exposure of students to literary texts can improve their performance in English language. Azikiwe (1998) asserts that to learn literature written in English is to understand it. Since language is a vehicle through which records of events are kept and people will consult materials for self improvement.

"Literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language; deviates systematically from everyday speech" most of the writers of literary texts make use of words that the meaning are not derived easily. One has to infer meaning to their works at times before it will be understood more especially poetry.

Examples; J. P. Clerk, "Abiku", Wole Soyinka, "Abiku", Wole Soyinka's telephone conversation etc.

What is Education?

Garba (1996) defines education as an "act of impacting knowledge, skills, attitude and values to somebody which for convinces we shall call student, with the aim of bringing about a change in his/her behaviour". The National Policy on Education (1981) defines education as "that process that helps to develop man physically, morally, socially.... to enable him function in any society he finds himself in the same vein, Lewis (1995) maintains that the purpose of education is to enable man to understand better the world in which they live so that they may fully express their potential capabilities, whether spiritual, intellectual or material... Uche (1986) summits that it is the process by which persons... develop their intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical power so as to become more fully participating members of the community to which they belong".

Conclusion

Research plays a very vital role in human life. This is because it is through research that people are exposed to new ideas, knowledge and become well informed about a particular issue and at the same time think of new innovation which may bring about societal development. The role language and literature play cannot be neglected because it is through language and literature that most of the information are

communicated. Education happens to be the bedrock of all that is taking place in our educationally institutions. Ekpiware (2011) submits that "education cannot take place in the absence of language".

Suggestion

People should be encouraged to carry out research work in their areas of specialization so as to come up with innovation that will aid improvement and development. Language should be used as a tool for communication for positive attitude.

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