TOWARDS A REFLECTIVE NIGERIAN SOCIETY : THE GAP BETWEEN TEACHING AND RESEARCH

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Abstract

The relationship between teaching and research is often assumed and just as often ignored. Research should and does influence teaching (and vice versa), but the gap between the two can at times seem large. Teachers are told to use “research-based strategies” and yet such strategies may be presented to them stripped of the very sensitivity to context, analytic rigor, and thoughtful skepticism that are the hallmarks of quality research. This document outlines the gap and relationship between research and teaching in university education. It is an attempt to provide a foundation for conversations about the characteristics of high-quality university education research, how teachers might use it, and how it can be used to create and sustain communities of university education professionals who use and conduct research in meaningful and responsible ways.

Some important term has to be understood such as teaching and research.

According to Wikipedia, teaching is done by a teacher whose role is often formal and ongoing, carried out in a school or other places of formal education. In many countries, a person who wishes to become a teacher must first obtain specified professional qualifications or credentials from a university or college. These professional qualifications
may include the study of the science of teaching. Teachers, like other professionals, may have to continue their education after they qualify, a process known as continuing professional development. Teachers may use a lesson plan to facilitate student learning, teachers provide a curriculum. Teachers may provide instruction in literacy and numeracy, craftsmanship or vocational training, the arts, religion, civics, community roles, or life skills.

Research comprises "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humans, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications" (Shulman,1986). It is used to establish or confirm facts, reaffirm the results of previous work, solve new or existing problems, support theorems, or develop new theories. A research project may also be an expansion on past work in the field. To test the validity of instruments, procedures, or experiments, research may replicate elements of prior projects, or the project as a whole. The primary purposes of basic research are documentation, discovery, interpretation, or the research and

development of methods and systems for the advancement of human knowledge. Approaches to research depend on epistemologies, which vary considerably both within and between humanities and sciences. There are several forms of research: scientific, humanities, artistic, economic, social, business, marketing, practitioner research, etc

Understanding the Differences Between Teaching and Research

The differences between teaching and research can be examined in terms of several aspects. Some of the aspects are:-

The Training Process

The educational backgrounds of a teacher and researcher differ: the teacher specializes in domains and aspects related to the contents he teaches (content knowledge), general pedagogical aspects (pedagogical knowledge), and aspects relating to the pedagogical knowledge of the contents s/he teaches (pedagogical content knowledge) (Shulman, 1986). The researcher's academic background and training include content knowledge, knowledge regarding the research literature in the field of study. A researcher should be familiar with a variety of research tools, with ways of matching research questions, methodologies, tools, and data analyses.

Common issues in teachers' and researchers' education are areas of the topic of specialization, basic cognitive psychology and possibly, learning theories. But even when learning the same topics, the emphases are different.

The Initial Goals

A teacher and a researcher in the same class have different goals. The teacher's goals vary from general educational goals, general goals which are related to gaining skills in the area of interest, to goals relating to specific content knowledge.

The aim of the teachers include students' understanding, students' success in examinations, students' interest, involvement and even enjoyment of the course of study.

The researcher's goal is to answer a research question (or questions), by collecting relevant data for the research.

Role in the Classroom

The aforementioned differences in goals express themselves in the roles of the teacher and researcher in the classroom. The teacher is responsible for classroom organization---both physical and mental (i.e. the physical organization of the classroom and the students, creating learning sequences according to teaching goals, curriculum, and so on). The teacher must instantly respond to students' needs, distribute his/her attention among the students, follow individual students (who need help), and solve problems which do not relate to learning (e.g., disciplinary problems).

The intensity of the interactions among the teacher and students in the classroom dictates the teacher's instant reactions during lesson time. Such reactions are based on a combination of the teacher's knowledge, experience and intuition. However, a reflective teacher may examine the outcomes of her/his reactions and their influence on the course of events, and may modify her/his reactions to classroom happenings, to put learning back on the "right course" (Novotna, Lebethe, Rosen, & Zack, 2003). Teacher reactions and initiatives are guided by students' interests (from both affective and cognitive aspects), and the singularity of the situation (Labaree, 2003).

In contrast, the researcher is not responsible for classroom occurrences. She/he is motivated by the need to know and understand what is going on and why (Labaree, 2003). The researcher wishes to understand the sources of a certain thinking process or strategy students followed, sometimes regardless of the learning that did or did not take place. To achieve this, the researcher may sit near a small group of learners and observe their work from start to finish, as it is happening. Meanwhile, the teacher is moving among all the learners, watching parts of the learning processes of many students. The researcher will usually record observations, and hence can observe events and episodes, in an attempt to analyze and understand what happened from different perspectives, and to suggest interpretations and conclusions.

The functions of the researcher and teacher might align while interacting with students, and asking questions.

Both the one involved in teaching and that involved in research have a common goal of, listening to detail, they both function as designers: the teacher chooses curriculum materials to be adopted and changes to suit instructional goals. A researcher might design the research tools, or
research goals in accountancy education is an understanding of learning processes in order to improve teaching. There are descriptions of professional developmental processes that include the alternating performance of teaching and research, which specifically claim that the two points of view complement and empower one another (Magidson, 2005).

The Relationship Between Teaching and Research in University Education:-

The relationship between research and teaching has been examined at length in the context of university education. This can be seen in different perspectives – Positive, and Negative. The arguments supporting each position are described as follows:

Positive Relationship

There are several different arguments hypothesizing a positive relationship between research and teaching.

Research helps in expert and contemporary knowledge being passed onto the student. In certain institutions and disciplines, it is important for students to experience being at the cutting edge of their subject. This is a relationship where the excitement of engaging with the development of the knowledge base of the discipline itself contributes to student learning.

Textbooks may not be current in many rapidly developing areas. Lectures by active researchers aware of the newest perspectives in their field may be the first point of contact for students with the latest developments. Additionally, results from one's research can be used to clarify, update, and amend the teaching of a topic.

Every higher education student can potentially benefit from exposure to the methods and attitudes associated with well-developed forms of scholarly activity by developing the attitude of inquiry, the use of data to test theories and ideas, and the transferable skills of critical analysis and presentation of findings based on evidence. Active researchers are more effective at instilling an actively critical approach rather than a passive acceptance of facts.

Students appreciate teachers who present research that the teachers have actually conducted. This provides an authenticity to the presented material that differs from presentations by teachers who are only discussing the work of others in which they have no active involvement.

Research leads to credibility enhancement. Students have the desire to learn from people respected in their fields.

There is an important role for research in helping institutions to attract, reward and retain high caliber staff, who might otherwise not be available for undergraduate teaching.

Successful research can increase lecturer's confidence, leading to better classroom performance.

Teaching can be particularly good for young researchers because it can reinforce their ability to expound and clarify their thinking.

Directly, teaching provides a stimulus to individual academics. Discussions in class may produce ideas for further research. And some students' projects may produce data which could feed into published research or grant applications.

The process of teaching the subject matter of discipline forces academics to clarify the big picture, into which their specific research specialization fits, hence provides a positive impulse for their research. Preparation of teaching materials can elucidate gaps in the academic's knowledge base.

Negative Relationship

A review of literature also provides a list of arguments supporting a negative relationship between quality in research and teaching.

There is limited time, energy, and commitment, for faculty to do both teaching and research. With academics usually prioritizing research over teaching and significantly increased pressures on staff time particularly during academic terms, students suffer.

Teaching and research require contrary personality characteristics unlikely to be found in the same person. For example teaching success may depend on attributes such as gregariousness that might tend to be inversely correlated with attributes associated with research success such as intellectuality.

According to the divergent rewards model different obligations and rewards are allocated to each activity. Teaching does not contribute significantly towards overall salary, and therefore suffers in comparison to research, which does bring monetary gain.

Promotion for faculty on the basis of research alone sends a signal to young academics to reduce the time and effort spent on teaching to a minimum so that they can get on with churning out publications. It provides a clear incentive for faculty to neglect teaching in favor of research. Research-active staff being able to "buy themselves out of teaching" works along similar lines.

Academics may attempt to distort the curriculum toward their own research at the expense of a broader program of study.

Active research in an area might lead to strongly held views and consequently poor tolerance of alternative viewpoints raised in the classroom.

Researchers might pitch their classes at too high a level.

It is likely that research tends to be much more specialised than teaching and this would produce disparities between research content and teaching content. (Timothy and Yair 2008)

Teaching and Research in University Education Towards a Reflective Nigerian Society:-

Tertiary institutions or higher education occupies an important position in shaping the way future generations learn to cope with the complexities of sustainable development. This is because; they form a link between knowledge generation and transfer to society, in the work they do to prepare future decision-makers. They also play an important role in generating new knowledge that shapes and influences the decision made by governments, industry and other stakeholders, tertiary institutions also have a more direct role to play in that they actively contribute to societal development through providing a service to society and through more direct community engagement work.

Education for sustainable development innovations emphasizes the relationship between teaching, research and the broader community (made up of the environment, society, the economy and current and future generations).

Community engagement also includes opportunities for working with business and industry to ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns and improved
corporate governance. And lastly, it encourages tertiary institutions to review their relationship with the broader community, and their place and role within that community. (Palmers, 2013)

Conclusion:-

There is a gap between research and teaching and to bridge this gap, research and education should go together. In the university, sometimes, teaching could be taking place without proper research on what is to be thought, this could lead to a limited quality of information being passed. Research is a vital constituent of education. Once research is not properly conducted, comprehensive education might not be attained. As a lecturer it is vital for a proper research to be conducted in significant areas in the study of interest, this will provide a comprehensive knowledge of what is to be thought. Once thorough research is conducted and a comprehensive knowledge is passed on to the students, it will help the teachers to provide better and well equipped graduates that can contribute positively to the nation, Nigeria. But when proper research is not carried out, the graduates produced well not be able to contribute positively to the society. Therefore research is vital and should not be neglected during the process of educating student, especially the undergraduates.

Recommendation:-

It is therefore recommended that while undergoing an education process, research should not be neglected. And while undergoing a research work, it should also be aimed at providing a useful tool for producing sound education.

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