
Encouraging Research and Innovation in Business Education for National Development

By

SAM AMOBI AMAHUA
*School of Business Education,
Federal College of Education (Tech) Umunze,
Anambra State*

Abstract

In the developed nations of the world, research has come to assume an indispensable status in national development. These nations have attained impressive heights in food production and preservation, energy production and conservation, waste management, health care delivery, nuclear and space technology through research. The developing nations, including Nigeria, are yet to give research its prime position in their development plans and they are paying for it dearly. These developing nations have research institutes, universities and other tertiary institutions that should engage in research yet not much is being achieved through research. Many factors are responsible for this state of affairs among which are: limited focus of research in our tertiary institutions, lack of research grants, poor state of facilities and equipment, poor working conditions of research workers. In the face of this state of affairs this paper advocates that our development through education should be re-focused by continuing research training for academic staff, formulation of research agenda, for every faculty, emphasizing long term research programme, approaching research through team work, adequate allocation of funds for research, provision of facilities and equipment and giving research its prime position in our efforts to cope with emerging global challenges.

No nation can develop more than their education expertise guidelines.

Research, according to Maduakonam (2004) is an organized, systematic and Scientific method of collecting data. That is to say, it is an organized inquiry carried out to provide information for the solution of a problem. Business Education on the other hand is concerned

with sound development in individual in relation to:

- Personal skills and attitudes

- Technological literacy
- Employability skills and
 - Broad and specific occupational skills and knowledge (Aina, 2002).

Proper research in Business Education can only be achieved if technological advancement and institutional framework to support is assured. Developed nations have recognized that strong based scientific research that can address local needs or that allow it to adapt external technologies for a sustainable development is superior to over reliance on externally development technologies.

Relying highly on external assistance could make some of the students in Nigeria tertiary institutions face a difficult situation when trying to integrate research into their education. This is true because these students are not well equipped with the appropriate modern educational research methods and therefore lack the problem solving skills to generate or adapt locally relevant technological solutions. This also shows that no attempt is made in identifying and tackling on the issues of the moment.

Most often, some lecturer's intensiveness and non-chalant attitude towards updating their knowledge in the use and application of appropriate modern education research methods do contribute to student's poor research work (Umezulike, 2008). Making her own contribution on the evils of high rate of examination frauds in our tertiary institutions, Omemgboji (2008) frown on the arbitrary and unconcerned manner some lecturers do exploit their supervises to pay some amount of money and they will be given old projects to go and reproduce. These brain drain instructors according to Meaza (2009) are not helping students and development of the nation.

Again stagnation in knowledge had caused many supervisors resort to old method of carrying out research work. They (lecturers) are not perturbed on the slogan "push or perish" because they feel comfortable with the money they are collecting from students. Some in the effort to avert the problem of not being promoted resort on publishing in the local journals and book of readings that are assessed by their friends and alliers. All these, the researcher opine, could lead to students' abuse and disregard for research.

Furthermore, laxity on part of the supervisors and supervisees according to Umezulike (2009), makes the research work loose face and content validity. Making further submission on her observation, Umezulike in analyzing most of the research work observed that they are not appropriate and therefore cannot give true picture of the results of the study.

If nothing is done urgently, to address the situation, our clamour towards meeting up with qualitative and sound education and economic as well as sustainable development will be a mirage.

Features of Nigerian Research Environment

Limited Focus:

Research is carried out in Nigerian tertiary institutions for two main purposes: in partial fulfillment for the award of a degree, diploma or NCE for the promotion of staff (academic). Whether the research makes any impact on the society or not is only incidental and certainly tangential to these main purposes. Most researches in our institutions are therefore not geared towards the need of the society or to solve a particular problem as such they are earned out with less empirical proof of applicability (Igbogbor, 2002). Research in our tertiary institutions are neither of basic nature nor of problem-solving value and they are not geared towards seeking solutions to national and local development problems. This probably informs why research activities and research results in our colleges of Education and other tertiary institutions are neither publicized nor their discoveries commercialized.

Lack of Funds

Another major factor that vitiates the research interest of schools in Nigeria is lack of funds. In allocating funds to the institutions emphasis has remained on capital projects and payment of salaries and allowances. Little or no attention is paid to research. The prime objective of these institutions is teaching and learning which research not only enrich but also guarantees what is taught and how it is being undertaken (Iyela, 2002),

Lack of research grants

In the developed countries, multinational companies support research efforts of scholars in tertiary institution through research grant. Some of them directly request university scholars to engage in research in a specified area of interest to them or to solve a specific problem. Here in Nigeria, the companies seem to be ignorant of the importance of research to them in particular and the society in general and this probably informs their lack of interest in sponsoring academics to embark on research. And the government is not helping matters either, it neither encourages research nor creates necessary awareness for the multinational corporations to sponsor researches.

Attitudes of Academics Towards Research Grants

Though majority of academics do not have access to funds to embark on research, the few who are lucky to secure some do not make good use of research grants. Some of them use funds granted to them for research to build houses while many others use the money to buy cars and take titles in their communities or use part of it to solve some domestic problems. The consequence is that such researches are neither finished nor appropriate account rendered. This not only discourages the granting institution from sponsoring research but equally disqualify the academic for further grant. This misuse of research grant scuttles research in Nigeria (Iyela, 2002)

Levels of Involvement

In a bid to finish research studies and produce report quickly for either the award of certificate or academic promotion, elaborative and collaborative research studies are not engaged in by academics in Nigeria. Research procedures and methods are most often not followed and the findings are not needed beyond the immediate use of graduation or promotion.

The rush inhibits the involvement of experts in the formulation of research problems, design and validation of the instrument, the collection and interpretation of data or application of the results. The result is that research is neither useful to practitioners in the field nor directed to societal improvement. The more experts that make input in research studies the richer and more useful the research.

Emphasis on Individual Research

Due to selfishness individual rather than collaborative researches appear to be in vogue among our academics and the consequence is that many research efforts have failed to attract the desired acceptability. Many of these individual research papers have remained at the manuscript stage especially in relation to how results were arrived at (Iyela, 2002). Okebukolu (2002) observed that the research efforts of a team have a higher chance of acceptability than an individual effort.

Poor State of Laboratory Material and Equipment

Materials and equipment are used in carrying out research and where they are not adequate or are of poor quality the academic carrying out the research will be given unreliable data. The materials and equipment needed for rich research studies are inadequate in the universities in the country and in the research institutes and the few available ones are obsolete and out-dated. And this situation has made it very difficult for our academics to embark on meaningful research studies in the country (Iyela, 2002).

Inadequate References Materials

Libraries in the nation's universities lack current and up-to-date literature in all disciplines. Even the faculty and departmental libraries in these universities are equally as inadequate as the main libraries of these universities. The books and magazines, especially international magazines, are out-dated and obsolete and most of the books are discarded books from foreign countries. When an academic does not have access to current books and magazines and has to depend on residual knowledge and local materials, the only sources of information is the internet. But how many of them are ICT complaint, and even if many of them are ICT complaint, how many of them can afford ICT facilities to enable them be abreast with the latest information in their discipline.

Encouraging Research and Innovation in Business Education for National Development

The consequence is that our academic who should spearhead academic research are not abreast with the current development in their fields and bearing in mind that knowledge is dynamic, this situation constitutes a serious set-back for our academics in their research efforts.

Poor Working Conditions of Research Workers

Generally, workers, including academics, come to organizations with expectations on their personal needs to be met by the organization. And the extent by which such needs are met determines the workers level of satisfaction, and hence their commitment, performance and productivity. Researchers in Nigeria work under pitiable conditions, their remuneration is poor and they are not motivated adequately. Apart from the poor conditions of service, the researchers are handicapped by poor road network, poor communication, epileptic power supply, and poor accommodation. These uncomfortable conditions impede the interest and productivity of Nigerian academics/researchers.

The Way Forward

There is no doubt that research plays an important role in every country. For instance, education research provides the hard data and information which gives a clear picture, the true picture and the objective picture about how teaching and learning are earned out as well as about what is being done about schools and schooling. This rich picture enables stakeholders to appreciate the problems existing in education; identify the constraints to our present and future social and technical aspirations, and the role which schools can play in attaining our aspiration. It enables us to identify and select alternative paths of remedial or useful option. It equally enables us develop, control and direct our education to where we want it to go and be at any particular time, place and level; as well as enable us to learn from and improve our techniques of carrying out research itself, as a discipline (Ali, 1996).

From the foregoing, it is imperative that Nigerian researchers academics should undertake a serious reassessment of the issue of revitalizing education in Nigeria in te context of research so as to not only makes us participants in globalization but to position us strategically to be effective players. The Nigerian academic in educational institutions and research institutes can achieve this by, among others.

i) Continuing Research Training for Academic Staff

As earlier observed the focus of student research studies is to fulfill the requirement for award of a degree/diploma and most research studies by staff focus on promotion. Research studies of students at any level are usually insufficient training for career-long research engagement. There is therefore the need to involve academic staff in continuous research training through workshops, seminars and references on methods and purpose of scientific research.

(ii) Formulating Research Agenda for Every Faculty, Department, Unit and Sub-Unit: The senate of our universities can formulate research agenda for every faculty which in turn breaks it into sub themes and assign sub-theme to its departments and units. In this way every person will be involved and the best research findings will come out of such exercise and we shall be better enrich through this collaborative effort.

iii) Emphasizing Long Term Research Programme

As earlier observed, most researchers in our universities are not needed beyond the immediate use of qualification for a degree/diploma or promotion. This implies rushing everything to meet up with the time frame and this makes findings of such studies deficient in indepth study of the issue being addressed by such studies. If students are given project topics to research on for two years, and if academic staff research studies are properly looked at before accepting such for publication, we shall have better researcher and richer findings.

(iii) Approaching Research through Team Work

Encouraging teamwork as an approach to doing research will surely produce better results. Two good heads are better than one, they say and this should be applied to research work because when many experts are involved in carrying out a research, the findings will surely be enriching and contribute more in solving our socio-economic problems.

(iv) Building Bridges between Researchers and Users of Research Findings

It is observed that research findings are seldomly used by policy formulators and the private sector. If policy makers and the private sector use research findings then researchers will be motivated to shift from promotion-orientated researchers to researchers that will improve not only the education process by but also living standard of the citizens.

The above suggestions are in no way excluding individual, small-scale research, rather they are implying that the individual, small scale, seclusive, rapid result oriented research should take a back-seat while reserving the front seat for collaborative, action-oriented, impactful researches designed to improve the research capability of individual academics to improve the academic and professional credibility of departments, and to exert a meaningful influence on educational policy and practice (Obanya, 2002).

Equally too, in order to promote research culture in our universities, according to lyela (2002),

- i) Government should allocate part of the national budget to research to enable our universities extends to their academic staff.
- ii) Libraries in our universities should be equipped, equally equipment, facilities and materials necessary for meaningful research be provided.
- iii) The right environment should be created to enable potential researchers perform impactful research appropriate infrastructure and communicate on facilities, especially information technology. This means that internet

Encouraging Research and Innovation in Business Education for National Development

- connectivity, e-mail facilities and familiarity with computers should become part of the technical and professional equipment of all academics.
- iv) The attitude of both government and the private sector to research must change. The government should recognize the critical role of research with respect to our overall development and support.

Conclusion

Research in general plays important roles in human existence; the improved conditions in human lives today have been made possible by the application of the findings of scientific researches. This has been through the collective efforts of various disciplines. Research in each discipline brings about progress and development. This is true of the pure and applied sciences as it is true of the social and behavioural sciences.

In the field of education, research plays a very important role as is the case with other disciplines. Some of the roles played by education research include: the advancement of knowledge, increasing the understanding of educational phenomenon, providing solutions to educational problems, improvement of educational practices, and bringing about overall development and progress. Despite these roles of research, the required attention is not paid to it and this has continued to deny us the benefits derivable from research findings. Every effort must be made to reap the rich benefits of research.

References

- Ali, A. (1996). *Fundamental of research in education*, Awka: Meks Publishers Nigeria.
- Aliyu, A.Y. (1998). *The giant sleeps in the sun. a keynote address in education renaissance in Northern Nigeria*. A NOSOSA Publication, Okene: Desmond Tutu Publishers.
- Ejionueme, L.K. (2007). *Nigerian education in the 21st century: challenges and reform options*. *Nigeria Journal of Teacher Education and Teaching*. Vol 3(1) p 78-89.
- Igborgbor, G.C. (2007). *Refocusing education in the context of research and publications in educational institutions*. In Oriaifo, s.O. Nwaokolo P.O.E & Igborgbor, G.C (eds) *Reforcusing education in Nigeria*. Benin: Da-Syiva Influence.
- Iyela, A. (2002). *Dearth of research in Nigeria's tertiary institutions: causes and solutions*. In Oriaifo, S.O, Nwaokolo P.O.E & Igborgbor G.C. (eds) *Refocusing education in Nigeria*. Benin: Da-Sylva Influence.
- Nworgu, B.G. (1991). *Educational research: Basic issues and methodology*. Ibadan: Wisdom Publishers Ltd.

Obanya, P. (2002). *Revitalizing Education in Africa*. Ibadan: Startling-Horden Publishers Nig. Ltd.

Okafor, F.C. (1988). *Nigerian Teacher Education: A search for new ideology*. Enugu: fourth Dimension Publishers.

Onwuka, C.J.A (ed) (2000). *Introduction to education*. Enugu; Egovin Publishers. Ukeje, B.O. (1976). *Education for social reconstruction*. London: Macmillan Education