

An Abstraction of Research Findings for Policy Formulation and Decision Making in Government Establishments in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was poised on the ideological abstraction of research findings for policy formulation and decision making in government establishments in Rivers State. The abstract was culled from a Ph.D. thesis of the Department of Science Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka. This current research study adopted the descriptive summary research design. The population for the study consists of 240 respondents drawn from government establishments and universities in Rivers State. One research question as well as an hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. A four (4) points Likert type of scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA - 4 points), Agree (A - 3 points), Disagree (D - 2 points) to Strongly Disagree (SD- 1 point) were used for the items on the questionnaire. A mean of 2.5 was determined as the cut-off point for the items. t-test statistic was used to test the only formulated hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. It was discovered that research findings as well as recommendations were not used for policy formulation and decision making in public establishments as well as universities. The implications for the study were noted.

Key words: Abstraction, research, Policy formulation research findings, Business Education Programme.

1. Introduction

Research is a major activity that takes place in the university community. It is a requirement for the completion of a programme in the educational system. Universities are considered as centers of excellence; places through which technological and otherwise development could be attained globally. One very way universities help to promote development or advancement in any polity is through research. Research, therefore is one of the scientific approaches utilized to arrive at reliable and correct decisions (Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2008). According to Egbule & Okobia (2001), research is an examination, inquiry, investigation or an experiment which is aimed at discovering facts.

Generally, research is an exercise in problem solving. It is an organized method of looking into a problem situation with the aim of solving it. Research implies some systematic investigation into a problematic situation with a view to solving or exposing the problem (Ogomaka, 1992). According to Ubulom & Enyekit (2001), research is a formal systematic and robust process of carrying out analysis of an object or a particular situation to discover and develop an organized body of knowledge. This process leads to generalizations and predictions. The explosion of knowledge today is due to research. In research, there is controlled observation; description, objective and analysis all lead to development or formulation of principles and theories. Principles and theories help serve in forecasting what may occur later in life and how such future occurrences can be controlled.

The main thrust of research is to build upon a body of knowledge and to improve on how man manages and enjoys his environment (Best & Kahn, 2006; Herbert, 1990; Kerlinger, 1976 and Osuala, 2005). To carry out any research, the following points must be considered. Research is vital to taking decisions concerning education in terms of educational assessment and evaluation. Education, as a discipline is within the behavioural sciences which deal with the modification of human behaviour and management of teaching-learning situation within the classroom setting. Thus, educational research findings provide solutions to educational problems through the application of scientific procedures (Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2008). Research findings, according Okwilagwe (1999) are the central energy sources

necessary for generating the current that ensures the existence and development of a nation. If well utilized, it brings about self-realization, better human relationship and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness. The extracted abstract of an evaluation study carried out by Ubulom (2006: xv) reads:

This study evaluated undergraduate business education degree programme(s) of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, University of Calabar, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Rivers State College of Education, Port Harcourt and Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, Onitsha with special focus on variables such as context (objectives and curriculum contents), Input (quality of students at the point of entry in terms of admission requirements, quantity and qualifications of teaching staff, laboratories/studios, funding, instructional facilities and equipment), process (effective instructional delivery and procedure used for effective implementation) and product (quality and performance competencies of business education graduates). An evaluation research design was adopted for the study. In addition to using checklists and rating scales, for data collection from the 49 business education lecturers, 744 business education students and 198 senior staff who represented employers of business education graduates, the researcher also used data from personal on-the-spot observation to corroborate or refute data from the checklists and rating scales. Against this background, six sets of checklists and three (3) sets of rating scales were used as research instruments for collecting data for this study. Mean and standard deviation scores were computed and used to answer the five (5) research questions, and to determine the extent of significant difference existing between required and observed variables at 0.05 alpha levels, Multiple Analysis of Variance was employed to analyse the data and test the validity of the nine (9) hypotheses. The results of the study revealed that the objectives, curriculum contents, quality of students at the point of entry in terms of admission requirements, teaching competency and instructional procedures for undergraduate business education degree programmes of the institutions investigated are adequate and meet the required standards while the quantity and qualifications of teaching staff, funding and facilities and equipment are not adequate and do not meet the required standards of the National Universities Commission (NUC). The results also revealed that differences exist in the curriculum contents, quantity and qualifications of teaching staff, and facilities used in implementing undergraduate business education degree programmes while no difference exists in the objectives, quality of students at the point of entry in terms of admission requirements, funding and teaching competency and instructional procedures in business education programmes among the tertiary institutions investigated. The results also revealed that no difference exists between the observed objectives, curriculum contents, quality of students at the point of entry in terms of admission requirements, teaching competency and instructional procedures used in implementing undergraduate business education degree programmes and that required standards of the NUC. On the other hand, the results showed that difference exists in the observed quantity and qualifications of teaching staff, facilities and equipment used in implementing undergraduate business education degree programmes and the funding of the undergraduate business education degree programmes as required standards of the NUC. It was recommended that funds be provided to enable new facilities be provided and the existing ones be maintained and/or upgraded to standard for smooth running of undergraduate business education degree programmes. The authorities of the institutions should imbibe the attitude of adequately maintaining the facilities. Firms and private individuals should be encouraged through tax rebate to assist in donating to the education endowment fund of the tertiary institutions.

Educational research findings have been adjudged the best thing that could happen in Nigeria. If educational research findings are effectively implemented by stakeholders in education, the Nigerian educational system stands to reap abundance of benefits. There is an extensive and growing literature in the area of educational research and evaluation (Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2007). Osakwe (2007) opined that the process of moving the new understanding and new product from research practice usually takes time. A number of factors are responsible for delay in the utilization of research findings in our educational setting.

The above implies that research is the discovery and interpretation of facts. Furthermore, Whawo (1992) explained that it is a process of searching for solutions to an identified problem. Such a problem, according to him, generates the desire to critically examine it so that a solution could be reached. The problem is analyzed systematically with a view of providing solution to it. Whatever data that is generated through research not only add to existing knowledge but also aid development in all its ramifications.

Despite the overwhelming value of educational research findings, it seems that they are not effectively utilized (Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2008). This has led to the gaps created in the harmonious utilization of the findings (Osakwe, 2007). There are major crisis in the processing of information about new research based on innovation and its application to routine daily activities.

2. Research Question

The study was guided by a single research question, which is: What are causes of non-utilization of research findings for policy formulation and decision making?

3. Hypothesis

A single null hypothesis was formulated and tested in this study, which is: There is no significant difference in the mean response scores of principal officers in public establishments and the universities about the non-utilization of research findings for policy formulation and decision making.

4. Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consists of 240 respondents made up of General Managers (GM5) of government establishments as well as Deans of faculties of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. A 4-point Likert type of scale made up of Strongly Agree (SA - 4 points), Agree (A - 3 points), Disagree (D - 2 points) and Strongly Disagree (SD - 1 point) was used to analyze the research question. The mean cut-off point was peg on 2.5. The above implies that any mean cut-off point on 2.5 and above were determined as acceptance, while means less than 2.5 were determined as rejected. The t-test statistics was used to analyze the hypothesis in the study.

5. Results

(a) Research Question

What are the causes of non-utilization of research findings for policy formulation and decision making in government establishment?

Table 1 shows the responses of the respondents on the different items. Item 1 reveals that 204 respondents responded strongly agree on the item, while 36 of them indicated agree. The mean cutoff point for this item was 3.85 and it was termed accepted, since it is higher the cut-off point 2.5 mean. Item 2, has 199 of the respondents acceptance while 40 noted agreed, and only 1 of the respondent noted disagree. It was also accepted as the mean for this item was 3.82 as it is also above the cut-off point of 2.5 mean score. Item 3, on the same table 1, shows that 184 of the respondent that indicated strongly agree, 30 indicated agree and only 26 of the respondent indicated disagree. The mean score for this item was 3.66 and it is accepted as it is higher than the cut-off point of 2.5 mean.

For item 4, 209 of the respondents indicated strongly agree, 25 indicated agree while only 6 of the respondents indicated disagree. The mean score for item 4 on table 1, was 3.85 and it was accepted, since it was higher than the cut-off point of 2.5 mean. While item 5, has 140 of the respondents that indicated strongly agree, 60 indicated agree and only 40 of the respondents indicated disagree. The mean for this item was 3.41 and it was termed accepted as it is higher than the 2.5 cut-off point mean score. Item 6, has 200 of the respondents that indicated strongly agree, 24 indicated agree while only 16 of the respondents indicated disagree. The mean score for the item was 3.76 and it was also accepted as it is higher than the cut-off point of 2.5 mean score.

Items 7 and 8 on Table 1 shows that 210 of the respondents indicated strongly agree, 20 of them indicated agree, while none of them indicated strongly disagree and the mean score for item 7 was 3.79 which was regarded as accepted, while item 8 has 204 of the respondents noted strongly agree, 30 of them indicated agree and 6 noted disagree. The mean score for the item was 3.82 and was termed accepted, since it was higher than the cut-off point of 2.5. It can be observed that respondents indicated accepted for 8 items since the mean scores are above the mean cut-off point of 2.5.

(b) Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean response scores of principal officers in public establishments and the universities communities about the non-utilization of research findings for policy formulation and decision making.

Table 2 indicates that the calculated t-value was 2.04 as is greater than the critical value of 1.960 at 0.05 level of significant. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected and the acceptance of the alternative with the mean scores of 3.01 and 2.13 for Deans and General Managers of public establishments and universities communities respectively. It then implies that the non-utilization of research findings influences and affects the policy formulation and decisions making process of general managers and Deans in public establishments and university communities in Rivers State.

6. Discussion

Educational research findings are a yardstick for educational assessment and evaluation as well as basic pointers to making valuable decisions and effective judgment aimed at promoting educational standards for national development. It helps the teacher, educational planners and educational managers to plan curriculum and teaching to meet the needs of students through flexibility and innovativeness. These further lead to the growth and development of any nation. The findings agree with Ebebuwa-Okoh (2007), she equally disagree that ignorance to the value of research, and poorly done research are contributing factors. However, the probable reason for the nonchalant attitude of policy formulators is that Nigerians seem to be always very interested in making white elephant proposals without being interested in the outcome. The effects of the attitude from the second question are under-development.

The study reveals that there is no significance difference between male and female members of the university community's perception on the utilization of educational research findings. The reason for this finding could be the fact that they are exposed to the same environment. This finding agrees with that of Ebebuwa-Okoh (2007) who did not find gender as a significant factor in their studies.

Educational qualification was also found to show significant difference in the perception of the respondents about the utilization of educational research findings. The holders of PhD degree had higher disposal or positive perception toward the utilization of findings than the master degree holders then subsequently first degree. An explanation for this might be that the more the body of knowledge one is exposed to, the higher the understanding of the usefulness of findings and its implications as well as the innovation it brings to mankind. This finding supports earlier researches conducted by Ebebuwa-Okoh (2007) who found significant difference.

7. Implications of the Findings and Conclusion

The findings of this study have implications for policy formulations decision makers and educational programmes' evaluators on programme implementation and evaluation. This includes bodies such as ministries of education, establishments, National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education, National Board for Technical Education, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, multinational and local companies and international bodies and the stakeholders in the educational sector. The findings also have implications for the tertiary institutions, administrators and managers of public establishments should make references to research findings for policy formulation and decision making process.

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Table 1: Factors Responsible for Non-Utilization of Research Findings for Policy Formation and Decision-making in Government Establishments in Rivers State
 (N = 240)

S/N	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Remarks
1.	Lack of information and data bank for research finding for policy formulation and decision making.	204 (816)	36 (108)	-	-	3.85	Accept
2.	Wrong placement of non-experts as executives for policy formulation and decision making.	199 (796)	40 (120)	1 (2)	-	3.82	Accept
03...	Selfish interest of administrators in the use of existing policy statement for decision making.	184 (736)	30 (90)	26 (52)	-	3.66	Accept
4.	Lack of advocacy of current research findings to the public for reference purposes and decision making.	209 (836)	25 (75)	6 (10)	-	3.85	Accept
5.	Differences in political and administrative affliction and theories	140 (560)	30 (180)	40 (80)	-	3.41	Accept
6.	Educational qualification of the administrators/executives	200 (800)	24 (72)	16 (32)	-	3.76	Accept
7.	Ethnicity and religion affliction distorts the use of research findings for policy formulation and decision	210 (840)	20 (60)	-	10 (10)	3.79	Accept
8.	Lack of sponsorship for qualitative research by government and non- government organizations.	204 (816)	30 (90)	6 (12)	-	3.82	Accept

Table 2: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of male and female principal officers and executives in public establishments and universities on non-utilization of research findings for policy formulation and decision making

S/N	OFFICERS	X	SD	N	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Remarks
1	Deans	3.01	1.92	90	238	2.04	1.960	Reject
2	General Managers	2.13	1.73	150				

Significant at P = 0.05: N = 240 df = 238

Critical t = 1.960

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