

## Counselling for Utilization of University Students Research Findings by the Nigeria Government and Private Sector

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### Abstract

This study investigated the opinion of Academic Staff of Nigeria Universities regarding the utilization of university education students research findings in solving educational problems. The study sought to find out if government and private sector effectively utilize the university students research findings for improved productivity. A study sample of 100 academic staff (50 each) from Faculty of Education, University of Calabar and Faculty of Education, Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria was used for the study. A 15-item questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Two research hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of probability, using the t-test statistics. The findings indicated that the level of utilization of students educational research findings is not significantly high. The study also discovered that the level of utilization of students' research finding by government was not significantly different from that of the private sectors. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that the Federal Government should establish a Ministry of Higher Education to collaborate with the National University Commission to draw government full attention on how to utilize students research findings. Some counselling implications were also enhanced.

**Keywords:** Counselling, findings, government, Nigerian, private, research, sectors, students, university, utilization

### Introduction

In a world of permanent change with major breakthroughs occurring at astronomical pace, Nigeria seeks her place among the nations of the world. Education is seen by Nigeria as an instrument 'par excellence' for affecting the individuals' needs and national development in consonance with the realities of Nigerian environment and the world as a global village. It is in this vain that the nation moved from contextual to professional practice of education by positioning the tertiary education.

The major role of education is to produce the various classes of manpower needed by the economy (Usoro, 2012). In this regard, Nigeria has the primary education which lays the educational foundations for other levels of education, the secondary education whose broad goals are: preparation of the individual for useful living within the society and preparation for higher education and the tertiary education which include the university.

### The Nigerian university education

The university education is often described as the education above the secondary school level. The university education is often interchangeably referred to as the tertiary education. This tertiary education includes not only the university education but also colleges of education, polytechnics, monotchnics, institutions of technology, professional and specialized institutions above the secondary level. (NPE, 2004).

The university education in Nigeria is controlled by the National University Commission established in 1962 as an advisory agency to the government on university education matter.

The Federal Government of Nigeria, highlights the following functions of the university:

- a. contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- b. develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- c. develop the intellectual capacity or individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- d. acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- e. promote and encourage scholarship and community service;

- f. forge and cement national unity; and
- g. promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Accordingly, the federal government noted that the universities shall pursue these goals through:

- a. teaching;
- b. research and development;
- c. virile staff development programmes;
- d. generation and dissemination of knowledge;
- e. a variety of modes of programmes including full-time, part-time, block-release, day-release, sandwich, etc.;
- f. access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF);
- g. students, industrial work experience scheme (SIWES);
- h. maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate agencies;
- i. inter-institutional co-operation; and
- j. dedicated services to the community through extra-mural and extension services (NPE, 2004)

Research is a process of investigation. It is an examination of a phenomenon from different angles of finding the truth or the exact state of affairs. It is also viewed as a positive outcome of activity that is new, a change that can be utilized to improve existing situation (Akpan, 2009; Ali et al, 2000 & Usoro, 2011).

Educational research can be regarded as an activity designed to evolve theories guiding the principles and practice of education. It is an attempt to use the methods and procedures made popular in the physical sciences to find answers to problems facing education industry (Bako, 2005; Adelemo, 2001 & Idaka, 2005). Generally, research is any kind of search for knowledge buttressed by a sound reason with an expectation' of using the findings to enhance a positive change which is sustainable development. Thus, research and development go hand in hand.

The university research is therefore meant to develop the nation economically, politically, socially, morally, technologically, etc. To ensure the relevance of university research to national development, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) stated the followings:

- a. Government will direct the national universities commission, the National Educational Research Council and other appropriate bodies to identify the areas of need and priority. Universities can base their research programmes on these.
- b. Government will support closer links between the universities, industry and the various research councils.
- c. Government will encourage locally-based industries to develop direct links with research institutes and universities to facilitate research into their products and problems.
- d. Universities will be required to keep government and industry informed about their research results
- e. Government will ensure effective utilization of the results of universities research and promising research results which at first look unprofitable but are likely to pay off in the long run will be taken up and developed by government.

The National University Commission (NUC) was established in 1962 as a parastatal under the Federal Ministry of Education. The functions of the Commission include:

- a. Granting approval for all academic programme run in Nigerian universities;
- b. Granting approval for all the establishment of all higher educational institutions offering degree programmes in the Nigerian universities;
- c. Ensuring quality assurance of all academic programmes offered in Nigerian universities;
- d. Serving as channel for all external support to Nigerian universities.

As a coordinating and regulating body, the Commission ensures that adequate and relevant manpower are recruited to sustain the universities. As a channel through which funds are made available by government and other donor agencies to the universities, the commission ensures that such funds are used for both the smooth running of the universities and as research grants. These research grants are meant to alleviate the financial burden of both the students and academic staff in the course of the research

(Bako, 2000), (Okebukola, 2004) and (Adelemo, 2001) contend that one of the core reasons for positioning tertiary education is for research writing. They explained that research writing is an effective means of boosting sustainable economic development and reinforcing competitions for rapid growth of individuals, private sectors and the government.

Under the colonial rule, much of the activities in educational research followed their legacy, with the colonial masters, influencing the system, the agenda and the pattern of educational research, The Yaba High College (1934) and University of Ibadan (1948) and other centers were established for the purpose of promoting political,

social and economic interest (Obikoya, 2003) (Obanya et al, 1998). Research in such centers catered for cocoa, palm produce, groundnut, cotton which were the agricultural interest of the colonial rule (Obikoya, 2003 and Ipay, 1998) added that with Nigeria's independence in 1960, the dysfunctional education provided for Nigerians was frowned at, leading to the introduction of diverse tertiary institutions to cater for the desired educational needs and development of the nation. Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) were borne out of the desire for essential researches for meaningful sustainable development of individuals and the nation.

Nevertheless, individuals, groups, tertiary institutions within and outside the country rose up to sponsor and encourage research activities which were accommodated and promoted to optimal level and international acclaim (Bako, 2005), (UNESCO, 1997), (ASUU, 2002). (Bako, 2005) and (Adelewo, 2001) added that individual universities in the country earned global respect and recognition in specific discipline.

From the late 1990s till date (Obikoya, 2002), (Ukeje, 2002), and (Okebukola, 2006) observed a great decline in research. They attributed this decline to the fact that most people see research as waste of funds, thereby distributing universities functions, resources, and recruitment of staff training. (Jimoh, 2008) added that factors such as philosophy of national development; frequent change of political powers with its attendant inconsistency and incoherent government policies and programmes; lack of separate ministry for higher education, gross shortage of equipments for experimental research despite the provision of research grants to lecturers and students among others, are responsible for ineffective utilization of research findings. With the highlighted trend from available literature it is not unusual to spot a gap between research findings and its utilization for national building. This study therefore sought to investigate the interaction between tertiary education research findings carried out in the faculty of education and its utilization by government and private agencies.

### **The importance of research findings**

Universities in Nigeria are not only expected to perform the mandatory functions of providing degree certificates and corresponding knowledge, but also to provide solutions to some of those problems that confront the Nigerian society.

According to National Universities Commission (NUC, 2007), universities research findings shall be relevant to the national developmental goals. The research findings include those of the academic staff and those of the students. In this regard, universities shall be encouraged to disseminate their research findings to both government and industries.

Research findings can influence decisions at many levels. This includes: caring for individual patients, in developing practice guidelines in developing policy, in developing educational programmes (Cimp, 1985). If educational research findings are collated yearly by government and Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC), it will go a long way in helping the government cater for, prevent, curb and control problems such as corruption and examination malpractice that have eaten deep into only the educational sector but the society as a whole.

Learning to use and evaluate research findings in daily practice is an important and lifelong part of professional development. This requires not only changes in educational programmes, but also realignment of institution so that management structures can support changes in knowledge and the implementation in procedures (Hopkins & Solomon, 1996).

Students of the Faculty of Education in the Nigerian universities carry out research on yearly basis as part of their course requirement for the award of degree. Several studies have been carried out by students of the Faculty of Education and findings arrived at, on tropical issues such as HIV/AIDS, unemployment, examination malpractice, cultism, election rigging, child abuse, kidnapping, armed robbery, bribery and corruption, etc. The findings of such research have been kept dormant in the Faculty libraries with the Librarians making no effort to disseminate the information from the findings to the school, the government or other industrial bodies that may have need for them. (Prescott et al, 1997) opined that Librarians can be used to furnish the school of new research discoveries as requested by the bodies involved in the implementing knowledge discovered.

Two reasons why students recycle old projects are:

- a. The students are aware that their research findings are not implemented.
- b. Researchers are not encouraged by government to promote their work which may be useful to the development of the society.

Gouws, 1994), (Haines and Jones, 1994) confirmed that researchers have not been systematically involved in the implementation of their own findings.

### **The problem**

One of the purposes for which the Nigerian government established and supports closer links with the Nigerian universities is to enable government come out with educational policies and programmes that will enhance effective growth at all spheres of life. Government seeks to achieve this objective through research findings from the various professional bodies of study in the universities especially in the area of education. In order to concretize this objective, government offers research grants to both lecturers and students in order to alleviate their financial burden and also a means of encouraging thorough research.

For sometimes now, various meaningful research has been carried out in areas of sciences, agriculture, among others. Government and other private sectors have successfully utilized the findings from such research, as evidenced in the discovery of various ways of alienating and alleviating health and agricultural problems in the country. However, despite the giant stride recorded by Nigerians in respect of research findings, Nigeria is still bisected with fluctuations in the educational system. This is evidenced in the various educational programmes the government introduced into the educational sector. The inability of the nation to successfully implement her educational programmes is a pointer to the fact that all is not well with the educational sector of the nation. This also calls for worry and wonder as to what happens to the various research findings from the students of the faculty of education. If government and private agencies like Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) and others are actually utilizing the findings of educational research carried out by students in the university, then why the inconsistency in the country's use of educational policies? (from 6-5-4 to 6-3-3-4 and UPE now UBE).

For this study, two questions agitated the minds of the researchers. These were:

1. To what extent does the Nigerian government utilize the research findings made by university education students in solving the problems bisecting the educational sector?
  2. Does the Nigerian government and the private sectors effectively utilize university education research findings as it is done by other spheres such as health, agriculture among others?
- Seeking answers to these posers constituted the major problem addressed in this study.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is specifically to determine the following:

1. The extent to which universities faculty of education students' research findings are being utilized by government in solving the countries educational problems.
2. Whether government differ from the private sectors in their utilization of these research findings.

### **Hypotheses**

The study was designed to test two null hypotheses:

1. The level of utilization of university of education students' research findings is not significantly high.
2. The level of utilization of university faculty of education students' research findings is not significantly different from the level of utilization by the private sectors.

### **Methodology**

The study design was survey, and a questionnaire titled Academic Staff Opinion on the Utilization of Students Research Findings Questionnaire (ASOUSRFQ) was the instrument used for data collection. The academic staff of Faculty of Education, Cross University of Technology and the academic staff of Faculty of Education, University of Calabar was used for this study. The population of academic staff of Faculty of Education in the two universities in Cross River State was 270 (90 from Cross River University of Technology and 180 from University of Calabar). A stratified random technique was used to select 100 academic staff from both universities during Academic Staff Union meeting (50 from each university).

The instrument was constructed and vetted by one of the researchers who is an expert in measurement and evaluation to determine the face and content reliabilities. It consisted of 15 items, with section (A) 5 items eliciting demographic information and section (B) 10 items eliciting information on the utilization of university student research findings in Faculty of Education by government and other agencies. A 4 point likert scale (strongly agree; agree; strongly disagree; disagree) was used. Using Cronbatch Alfa reliability estimate, the instrument yielded 0.65. The respondents were to indicate their opinion as represented in the items on the utilization of Faculty of Education research findings in solving educational problems. A total of 100 copies representing 100% were duly completed and returned. The hypotheses were analyzed using t-test statistics at .05 level of probability.

### **Data analysis and results**

Data analysis and results are presented hypothesis by hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 1:** The level of utilization of Faculty of Education students' research findings is not significantly high. In testing this hypothesis, the researchers reasoned that for the level of utilization to be adjudged significantly high, the score made on it should be significantly greater than 25.00 (which is the mid-point between agree and disagree, which is 2.5 multiplied by 10, the number of items measuring that variable. The null hypothesis is that the mean score representing the utilization of education students research findings is not significantly higher than 25.00 (Ho:  $M = 25.00$ ; H1:  $M > 25.00$ ). The hypothesis was tested with a t-test of one sample mean also known as population t-test). The results are represented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**A population t-test analysis of whether the level of utilization of education students research findings is significantly high**

| Variables                                  | Sample | SD   | t      |
|--|--------|------|--------|
| Levels of utilization of research findings | 22.05  | 5.62 | -0.524 |
| Reference mean                             | 25.00  |      |        |

Not significant at .05 level (critical t = 1.98) N = 100; df = 99

The result in Table 1 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.524 is less than the critical t-value of 1.98. Hence the null hypothesis is retained. In other words, the level of utilization of education students' research findings in solving educational problems in Nigeria is not significantly high.

**Hypothesis 2:** The level of utilization of university's Faculty of Education students' research findings is not significantly different from that of the private sector (Ho:  $M_g \neq M_p$ ). A dependent t-test was used to test this null hypothesis. The results are represented in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**A dependent t-test analysis of difference in the level of utilization of university faculty of education students research findings by government and private sector**

| Institution    | X     | SD   | t     | df |
|----------------|-------|------|-------|----|
| Government     | 22.0  | 5.62 | 0.252 | 99 |
| Reference mean | 22.00 | 5.60 |       |    |

Not significant at .05 level (critical t = 1.98) N = 100

Table 2 indicates that the calculated t-value of 0.252 is less than the critical t-value of 1.98 for a two tailed test. The null hypothesis is therefore retained. It therefore means that the utilization of research findings in education by government is not significantly different from the level of utilization by the private sector.

### Discussion of findings

From the data presented in this study, there is the indication that the research findings from the faculty of education in the universities have not been fully utilized by government in solving the nation's educational problems. The result of this study is pointer to why students recycle already completed projects as research work for the award of degrees in the university. The researchers discovered with dismay, that neither the government nor private sectors such as NERDC, ETF call for research findings from the Faculty of Education. The researchers also discovered that research findings which improve government economy are in the areas of health, agriculture, technology, etc. is because right from the colonial era, the colonial masters set up centers basically for the purpose of research. Such centers receive encouragement and support from government. The findings of this study confirms (Adelemo, 2001) (Obikoya, 2002), (Ukeje, 2002) and (Okebukola, 2002) that if government had laid emphasis on research findings, Nigeria would not suffer from incoherent and inconsistent educational implementation of educational policies. This, the researchers resolved, is as a result of governments' failure to establish Ministry of Higher Education to oversee the workability of research findings from the university.

The result in Table 2 of this study also disagreed with (Bako, 2005), (UNESCO, 1997), (Ipay, 1998) and (Idaka, 2005) in their findings that the encouragement government and private sectors like Education Trust Fund

(ETF) gave to individuals and the tertiary institutions gave rise to research findings in education which placed the country in a global recognition. The researchers noted that research grants from government and other private sectors like ETF does not conveniently see researchers through the financial rigors of carrying out a successful and detailed research. Final year students, the researchers noted are not assisted financially during their research carried out as course requirement for the award of a degree. Students research financial burden is often carried solely by their parents some of who may not have enough to support their children carryout thorough research. This, the researchers also noted, gives rise to the recycling of projects already carried out.

### **Counselling implication**

Counselling becomes necessary before and after students research work as course requirement for graduation. For example, there are a lot of complexities in research writing. Among them are:

- Getting a relevant topic for the research work.
- Drawing up a proposal for the research work within the given time frame.
- Writing the research outline.
- What the students stand to benefit if they carry out research in new areas, especially topical issues.
- What benefit will the researchers derive at the end of the project?
- What the nation stands to benefit from the students findings.

Students as well as the government should be counselled in the right direction for quality research and utilization of the findings.

### **Recommendations**

The implications for counselling are as follows:

- Government should establish Ministry of Higher Education in Nigeria to collaborate with the National Universities Commission (NUC). The establishment of Ministry of Higher Education will help to draw government's full attention to universities and help the government to understand the university education programmes.
- Every human being takes what will yield reward seriously. As a form of motivation, government should make it compulsory for all university final year students to be given research grants. This will help to reduce parental burden of funding for their wards research as part of course requirement for the award of degrees. This will also encourage the students to carry out thorough research and come out with findings that will help the government in solving educational problems.
- If a Federal Ministry of Higher Education is established, it should collaborate with NUC to introduce punitive measures to those universities whose students are not carrying out meaningful and useful research.
- Students with the best research findings should be brought to the knowledge of the nation and rewarded accordingly. This will enhance competition among students from various universities in the country.
- University ratings in the country should also be based on quality research work.
- Lecturers should collaborate with students and help them to get their research work and findings forwarded to where they can be implemented. This will help in reposing confidence in the students. The students will also appreciate the knowledge gained.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that:

1. Students' research findings in Faculty of Education of the Nigerian universities are not utilized by government and the private sectors in solving educational problems.
2. The utilization of university students' research findings in faculty of education is not significantly different from the level of utilization by the private sectors. This is because neither the government nor the private sectors demand for new research findings from the faculty of education.

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