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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent of availability and utilization of research findings in solving societal problems for economic growth and sustainable development in Nigeria. This represents a search in a different direction to attempt to explain the disappointing economic returns from education in Nigeria. Investments in education seem to have failed to deliver the goods in Nigeria and in most African countries, since most of them are still battling with under-development in the sense that the following indices of development noted by Udoidem (1992) are still eluding most African nations:

- A reduction of the level of unemployment;
- A reduction of the extent of personal and regional inequality;
- A reduction of the level of absolute poverty;
- A rise in the real output of goods and services and the improvement of the techniques of production;
- Improvement in literacy, health services, housing conditions, and government services;
- Improvement of the social and political consciousness of the people; and
- Greater ability to draw on local resources (human and material) to meet the local needs, that is, becoming self reliant.

There is obviously a discrepancy in the management of Nigeria's education that must be quickly addressed to ensure education's capacity to bring about sustainable national development. Research in education has increasingly recorded a significant correlation between literacy and sustainable development, yet as many as 44 per cent of Nigeria's adult population compared to Indonesia's 32 per cent, China's 27, Egypt's 26, Brazil's 19, and Mexico's 13, are unable to read and write in any language (Okoli and Duze, 2009). By June, 2010, Nigeria is still grouped by UNESCO among the 'e-9' countries parading about 70 percent of the world's illiterate population. The only other African country in this group is Egypt with a lower percentage than Nigeria. Also, among African Countries, Nigeria (the giant of Africa) was noted to have allocated the least in recent years to education (highest 11.12% in 1999, lowest 1.83% in 2003) as against UNESCO's 26 percent minimum budgetary allocation to

education (ASUU, 2002), whereas Egypt, Gambia, Gabon, Mauritius and Libya are doing relatively well in funding education (Ajao, 2003). This portrays a measure of irresponsibility on the part of policy makers especially as Nigeria is the 6th oil-rich country in the world.

With the current level of under-funding, together with inadequate human and material resources, compounded by poor technological applications, high level of poverty, unimaginable levels of mass illiteracy and unemployment, it becomes worrisome that Nigeria may not be able to achieve sustainable growth and development as stipulated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Numerous researches have been done by individuals without grants from anywhere and funds were never made available for providing efficient systems or models for disseminating and appropriating research findings in Nigeria (Oghenekowho, et al., 2006; Duze, 2009).

Education develops the individual to become more useful to himself and his society. It enables the individual to discover himself better and be better positioned to respond to his needs and those of the people living in his community. This in turn enables society to be receptive, to progress, and to aspire to invest more in the educated man for greater productivity and profitability. This investment can be effectively done through dissemination and appropriation of research findings. Just as labour does not hire itself, goods and services do not provide themselves, factories do not build themselves, innovative ideas do not come by themselves, money does not invest itself, profits are not made by themselves, and risk is not taken by itself (Enworom, 1994), so also does research not use itself. For research to be used it has to be available in the first place, and like noted above, research does not make itself available. People must seek them out and use them for dominating the environment for better life-living.

Research and its benefits to any country's development are enormous but for it to realize all its benefits fully, its findings must be put to use. Research is a fundamental tool for knowledge development and dissemination, the essence of which is to logically and systematically find solutions to human problems for better living. Industrialized countries have continued to use research for greater development. As soon as something new that will enhance better living is discovered, it is made available to the general public through the media, the internet, the hospitals, educational institutions, name it. Even when the research is still in the "oven" word is already out everywhere about what use and benefit the results or expected findings would be to mankind. But this is not so in developing countries. A major task of this investigation is to find reasons why research findings are 'hidden' in developing nations like Nigeria.

Besides, there is no aspect of the benefits of education or the indices of development that cannot be studied and evaluated empirically. Research findings and evaluations in education abound locally and internationally to the extent that we have no reason, especially in Nigeria and Africa, to be retrogressing in development and modernization. At the same time, African countries have an array of well-educated manpower that can conduct quality research, so that the skills cannot be said to be lacking. What may be a problem could be the inability of Africans to evoke sufficient willpower for innovations that would trigger off effective and efficient machineries for information dissemination (availability) and appropriation (utilization).

Efforts at development would certainly be fruitless and would amount to poor returns in investment when the findings/evaluations from research are not properly disseminated and appropriated. That our oil-rich Nigeria, occupying the position of the 6th largest producer of oil in the world, is ranked 151st out of 174 countries on the recent HDR rating is an evident of poor returns from education. This ranking

implies a situation of absolute poverty. School enrolment, access to good education, access to water and power, proper health services, infant mortality, fertility rates, nutrition rates, life expectancy, food deficit position, etc are all posing great threats and painting a vivid picture of a nation in distress (Anyia, 2003; Duze, 2009). This is disquieting and worrisome, as research findings abound that ought to be used to solve these problems.

That research is a basic task mandate of higher education globally is not debatable. What is debatable is the dynamics of research under various settings and circumstances. Research is a complex activity and its contribution to nation-building is enormous. This has necessitated the continuous call by governments, research organizations, universities, and other higher institutions for a vibrant research function in higher education worldwide. To achieve this, special attention must be paid to its management, important among which, are proper dissemination and appropriation (Duze, 2009). Is it that research findings which ought to be made known to the general public are hidden, or that they are not reachable when needed? Could the extent of availability and utilization of research findings/evaluations explain the missing link between education and sustainable development in Nigeria? It was in this light that this paper investigated the extent of availability and utilization of research findings in Nigeria for sustainable national development. To guide the thrust of the study, four research questions were raised from which two null hypotheses were formulated and tested.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of availability of research findings in Nigeria?
2. What is the extent of utilization of research findings in Nigeria?
3. Do stakeholders in nation building differ in their opinions about the extent of availability of research findings in Nigeria?
4. Do stakeholders in nation building differ in their opinions about the extent of utilization of research findings in Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the opinions of stakeholders on the extent of availability of research findings in Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the opinions of stakeholders on the extent of utilization of research findings in Nigeria?

Methodology

The study surveyed the extent of availability and utilization of research findings in Nigeria for nation building using the ex-post facto design, since only the opinions of subjects were analyzed without any manipulation of independent variables. The target population was all the stakeholders in nation building who are either producers or consumers of research findings from education. These were categorized into three as university academic staff, educational managers in government ministries, boards, and the legislature, and the private sector managers in the industries and firms. An initial sample of 1,500

respondents was selected, 500 from each category, through simple random sampling. It was to these that the copies of the instrument used for data collection, a structured questionnaire, were administered.

The instrument contained twenty-eight items on a four-point scale of Very High (4 points), High (3 points), Low (2 points), and Very Low (1 point), which elicited considerable information on the two variables of study, availability and utilization of research findings. Mean rating of 2.50 and above was the minimum acceptable value for positive indications. The validity of the instrument was certified by research fellows and experts in education. In a pilot test administered twice between a time period of three weeks to a total of thirty respondents not involved in this study (the three categories being well represented), a reliability coefficient of $r = 0.92$ was obtained for the instrument through the test-retest method. This value of r was found to be satisfactory for the instrument.

Out of the 1,500 copies of the questionnaire administered by the researcher with the help of some third parties 1,086 were retrieved. The researcher further dropped randomly six respondents to make for equal numbers of 360 in each category, bringing the total sample size to 1,080. The mean and ANOVA were used for data analysis.

Results

Data were analyzed according to how they related to the two research questions and the two null hypotheses formulated. To answer the two research questions raised and test the two null hypotheses formulated, the responses of university academic staff, educational managers in government, and managers of industries and firms were collated and scored for each of the variables, and their respective mean scores computed. The three independent means were then subjected to the One-way analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for each of the variables investigated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance, $df = 2, 1,077$, and region of rejection $R: F > 3.00$. The results were presented in Tables 1-3.

Research Questions One and Two

Table 1: Distribution of Sample Size, Scores and Computed Mean Scores for the Three Categories of Respondents and the Two Variables Investigated ($N = 1080$)

Variables	University Academic Staff n = 360		Educational Managers (Government) n = 360		Managers of Industries and Firms n = 360	
	Scores	Mean	Scores	mean	Scores	Mean
Availability	709	1.97	572	1.59	727	2.02
Utilization	677	1.88	580	1.61	774	2.15

The result shown in Table 1 clearly indicated that research findings were hardly available and very scarcely utilized in the various efforts at nation building in Nigeria. This is evidenced by the very low

mean ratings for the two variables of study by the university academic staff (1.97 and 1.88), the educational managers in government (1.59 and 1.61), and the managers of industries and firms (2.02 and 2.15). None of the ratings reached the minimum acceptable mean score of 2.50.

Hypothesis One (H_{o1})

Table 2: One-way ANOVA Summary Table on Availability of Research Findings (N = 1,080)

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F _{cal}	F _{critical}	Decision p < 0.05
Between Groups	2	169.58	339.16			Not significant
	1077	7454595.51	6921.63	0.049	3.00	
Within Groups	1079	7454765.09	-			
Total						

The result in Table 2 showed that the calculated F value of 0.049 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.00, therefore the null hypothesis was retained. This meant that there was no significant difference among the three categories of respondents implying that university academic staff, educational managers (government) and managers of industries and firms agreed that research findings were not generally available for use in the efforts at nation building in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two (H_{o2})

Table 3: One-way ANOVA Summary Table on Utilization of Research Findings (N = 1,080).

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F _{cal}	F _{critical}	Decision p < 0.05
Between Groups	2	154.13	308.26			Not significant
	1077	6309410.64	5858.32	0.053	3.00	
Within Groups	1079	6309564.77	-			
Total						

The result in Table 3 showed that the calculated F value of 0.053 is smaller than the critical F value of 3.00, therefore the null hypothesis was retained meaning that there was no significant difference between the three categories of respondents. This implied that university academic staff, educational managers (government) and managers of industries and firms, all agree that research findings were not generally used at efforts of nation building in Nigeria.

Discussion

The two research questions empirically answered and the two null hypotheses tested in this study all point to the fact that the stakeholders in nation building – university academic staff, educational managers in government, and managers of industries and firms who were all well aware of the enormous contributions that research outputs can make in solving education's problems and enhancing educational practices for sustainable national development, indicated low levels in the availability and utilization of both local and international research findings. However, the private sector, more than the universities and the government, appeared to be more inclined to making use of research findings.

The problem in Nigeria and most African countries is that education has been highly politicized to suit the government in power rather than address the real needs of the education sector. Even when astute academics who have published ideal research information in international journals for boosting the education sector were appointed into positions of policy-making in government, they tended to fall back to the tenets of 'party-politics' than to apply their research findings in solving one or two of the numerous educational, social, economic, political or religious problems that militate against sustainable national development. This finding tallies with that of Oghenekohwo et al (2007), whose chief recommendation was that higher education should be de-politicized having observed the trends in government handling of the education sector by successive leaders.

Furthermore, this study underpinned the fact that policy-makers are not truly committed to solving education's problems since they have indicated in this study that they know what to do but fail to do it. For instance, research has repeatedly pointed at inadequate funding as being largely responsible for the ills in education yet, the Nigerian government continues to reduce budgetary allocations to education and starve educational institutions of necessary funds. (Ajao, 2003; ASUU, 2002; Okebukola, 1998; Okon, 2006; Duze, 2009).

The inability to access the internet for information, the institutions' poor and obsolete libraries, and the financial constraints in publishing research studies in books and journals for wider usage have all combined to limit the dissemination and appropriation of research findings in Nigeria. However, the lecturers tend to search for and use whatever was available only to satisfy the conditions for promotion and overcome the "Publish-or-Perish" syndrome in academics (Duze, 2009). It is commonly observed that volumes of valuable research reports done by academics and students which addressed the problems of Nigeria and other African nations are stacked away in departmental and faculty offices, gathering dust and occupying scarce spaces rather than being widely disseminated and appropriated in solving human problems that will lift African nations from extreme poverty to economic growth and modernization. There is therefore, very poor dissemination and appropriation of research information in Nigeria.

This finding also reflects Okebukola's (2002) and Adu's (2003) information on research and publication in Nigeria. Okebukola (2002) noted that the highest number of publications by Nigerian academics in international journals between 1962 and 2000 was ten in 1998 which dropped to one in 2000. Also, the highest number of active local journals were twenty-two in 1998 and had dropped to three in 2000. Adu (2003) had lamented Nigeria's low volume of research and publication (711) in 1995 as compared to some other third world countries like South Africa, 3,414; Brazil, 5,440; and India, 14,883, despite having the largest number of universities (86) in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Conclusion

The results in this study revealed that research findings in foreign journals were scarcely available and very rarely used while those in local journals were fairly available but also very rarely used in solving educational and societal problems in Nigeria. No significant difference was found among the three categories of stakeholders – university academic staff, educational managers (government), and managers of industries and firms (private sector) – on both availability and utilization of research findings in nation building.

It was concluded that research in Nigeria appeared to be conducted in higher institutions only to satisfy the various academic requirements for students and staff. They remain in faculty archives occupying space, gathering dust and feeding cockroaches and rodents while the nation is in dire need of the findings to solve her numerous educational, social, political, economic, and religious problems which could have lifted Nigerian masses from poverty, sickness and disease to wealth, health and prosperity, and from tribalism, ethnicity, nepotism, corruption to unity and dignity required to attain sustainable national development.

Recommendations

From this discourse, it was recommended that Nigerian universities should develop avenues for 'selling' their research findings and insist that they be used by decision-makers in solving man's numerous problems, especially in developing countries. There is also the need, and the time is now, to de-politicize education and fund education adequately for the nation to begin to reap in full education's benefits including those accruing from utilizing research findings to attain sustainable national development.

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