

SURVIVAL OF THE NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

A Book of Readings

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A Publication of the Association for Promoting Quality Education in Nigeria
(APQEN).

Volume 7

First Published in 1996

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ISBN 979 - 31616 - 4 - 4

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PUBLISHED AND PRINTED BY:



University Trust Publishers
31 New Market Road, Nsukka
Phone: 042-770907

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THE UTILITY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS IN EDUCATION FOR THE SURVIVAL OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

The provisions of Decree No. 16 of 1985 has spelt out the purpose and mission of universities in Nigeria with massive flavours of social responsibility. The purpose of higher education in Nigeria was, henceforth, described thus:

- a The acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for the survival of individuals and society;
- b The development of the intellectual capacities of individual to understand and appreciate their environment.
- c The acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills to enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community;
- d The acquisition of an objective view of local and external environment;
- e The making of optimum contributions to national development through the training of higher level manpower;
- f The promotion and encouragement of scholarship and research.

This paper therefore attempts to examine the purpose of educational research in the context of our socio-economic background; discuss the co-ordination of educational research towards survival and propose strategies for co-ordination and utilization of research findings in education for the survival of the system.

The purpose of research

Research is the organised quest for new knowledge based on the scientific method. New knowledge may be pursued for several reasons. It may be pursued for its own sake and for satisfying human curiosity through basic or fundamental research. Hunger for knowledge to satisfy curiosity is more or less insatiable. In the process, the researcher does not envisage or know in advance, the benefit of the new knowledge that may result. But the purposeful pursuit of new for the solution of a specific human problem or need is applied research. This leads to innovation which is the intentional introduction of the achievements of research into production, to cut down costs, improve existing conditions and to speed up the rate of educational development.

The integration of basic knowledge, applied research and development research constitutes research and development and is the basis of sustainable development - survival Schofield (1974) defines education as the equivalent to experience, the experience of a living organism interacting with its normal environment. Education is an activity which aims at practical results in contrast with activities which aim at theoretical results. Education, therefore, implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it. It involves knowledge and understanding and some sort of cognitive

perspective which is not inert.

Survival means to remain alive in spite of disaster. The purpose of research in education therefore should be to aim at producing innovations for the survival of education inspite of the present economic and socio-political conditions in Nigeria.

Concerning the purpose and mission of higher education in Nigeria, since the establishment of University College, Ibadan in 1948, writers have played several tunes on the keynotes: teaching, research and service. Contradictions and misdirections in goals, or the purpose and mission of higher education in Nigeria has not only affected the allocation of resources but also management policies and programmes.

For example, since the inception of University education in 1948, managers and proprietors in Nigerian University system have not agreed on the goals of quantitative and qualitative growth concerning access to higher education and the priority scales to be accorded basic and applied research as well as public service in the allocation of resources. Lack of clarity in all these respects have persisted till the 1990s.

Tamuno (1987) argues that frequent debates and controversies over the claims of research and public service through the contributions of active scholars in academics are quite unnecessary. The bottom-line of their argument rest on what scale of resource-allocation fits each category of research. Indeed, those who provide the funds for higher/tertiary education except more than academic scholarship; they want in addition services of interest to the public. the content of the research schemes of staff and the curricular of students are thus closely scrutinized by some informed extra-mural critics of tertiary education.

The great debate between advocates of fundamental research and relevant research in Nigerian universities has to be moderated in favour of sane and humane considerations. Far more important is a clear recognition of the imperishable role of fundamental or basic research in expanding the frontiers of knowledge. The balance of the argument seems to favour fundamental research as the proper role of university teachers. Through this path, its advocates contend, can research in the humanities and sciences march to unlimited height with incalculable benefits for society or mankind.

Relevant research, on the other hand, others argue, is too limited in scope and depth as it is also subject, to the vagaries of short-term policy changes and interests. The proper yardstick for scholars in their various fields of research, and in this context educational research, is therefore that of timeliness and promise, research for survival. The humane application of such research findings will thus constitute a salutary challenge which all institutes of higher learning must accept for active consideration and application in their curriculum development review exercise. By so doing, products of our educational system will be able to demonstrate excellence in scholarship and service.

Co-ordination and publicity of educational research

Conventional knowledge has it that the proper role of the university is to preserve existing knowledge by teaching it to generations of students. In addition, universities publish books to make the knowledge available to those who may not pass through their walls and also seek to disseminate new knowledge by constantly labouring at the frontiers of knowledge. To achieve these, Universities cherish an atmosphere of free inquiring in both staff and students are allowed to challenge old knowledge with new knowledge until

a new "truth" is established.

The research and postgraduate development department of the National Universities Commission was established in 1987 primarily to co-ordinate research activities of the Universities and to co-ordinate and streamline post graduate development programmes in the universities. The department is charged with the following functions:-

- 1 Research grant Allocation to the federal Universities.
- 2 Co-ordination of University Research Project and Programmes.
- 3 Promoting interactions between universities research effort and those of other research oriented organisations.
- 4 Attracting funds from within and outside Nigeria for promoting and developing research in the universities.
- 5 Promoting and publicising Research findings and activities in Nigeria universities.
- 6 developing methodologies and modalities for monitoring research and fund utilization in universities.
- 7 Organising award schemes for post-graduate students who demonstrate outstanding feats in research work.

In pursuance of the above objectives, a number of activities have been embarked upon as reported in National Universities Commission (NUC) annual reports, statistical digests and research bulletin. The reports of some research grant releases and approved grants are shown in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Research Grant Release by Generations of Universities

Generation	Total amount due as at 1st Jan. 1992	Cumulative Releases as at 31 Dec. 1992	Percent Utilization
1st Generation:			
Ibadan, Lagos, Nsukka, Zaria, Ile-Ife, Benin	₦28,242,652	₦7,466,057	27%
2nd Generation:			
Jos, Calabar, Kano Ilorin, Maiduguri, Sokoto, P/Harcourt	₦14,863,787	₦7,671,027	52%
3rd Generation:			
Bauchi, Owerri, Minna, Akure, Yola, Abuja, Uyo	₦3,922,538	₦1,507,659	38%
Others:			
National Mathematical Centre, Abuja, French Language Village, Badagry, Arabic Language Village, Ngala	₦944,205	₦176,000	19%
Totals:	₦47,973,182	₦16,820,743	35%

Table 1: Source: NUC Research Bulletin (1989 - 1992)

Table 2: **Approved 1993 Allocation of Research Grants to Federally (NUC) Funded Universities**

INSTITUTION	RESEARCH GRANT ALLOCATION (NAIRA)
1. University of Ibadan	10,975,987.00
2. University of Lagos	9,350,523.00
3. University of Nigeria, Nsukka	11,427,505.00
4. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	10,425,956.00
5. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	11,205,851.00
6. University of Benin	9,958,020.00
7. University of Jos	6,953,374.00
8. University of Calabar	5,524,936.00
9. Bayero University, Kano	4,071,869.00
10. University of Maiduguri	4,590,853.00
11. Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto	2,709,107.00
12. University of Ilorin	7,084,725.00
13. University of Port Harcourt	6,280,202.00
14. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	2,331,474.00
15. Federal University of Technology, Owerri	3,152,415.00
16. Federal University of Technology, Minna	1,825,464.00
17. Federal University of Technology Akure	2,093,401.00
18. Federal University of Technology, Yola	1,848,605.00
19. University of Abuja	1,094,050.00
20. University of Uyo	3,842,006.00
21. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	3,012,855.00
SUB-TOTAL	119,749,178.00
22. National Mathematical Centre, Abuja	1,000,000.00
23. D.A.C., Zaria	500,000.00
24. French Language Village	500,000.00
25. Arabic Language Village	500,000.00
SUB-TOTAL	2,500,000.00
Nationally Co-ordinated Research	4,000,000.00
TOTAL	126,249,178.00

Table 1 shows Research Grant Releases by Generations of Universities. Table 2 shows Approved Allocation of Research Grants to Federally Funded Universities. Ironically, non of the reports documents a statistics of research conducted by staff and students in the different disciplines in the years concerned. It thus follows that the research output of Nigerian universities can only be quantified in terms of utilization of funds and not actual

qualification of authentic research work. There is therefore no promotion and publicising of research finding and activities so funded by government. This has resulted in duplications of findings/research activities conducted within the university system.

Thus, aside the fact that only about 35% of research grants allocated are utilized, there is no way to verify if the small percentage reported as utilised, had been actually utilized towards the improvement of the educational system and therefore contribute towards the survival of the system. This calls for improved methods of publicity of research activities, co-operation and co-ordination as the panacea for survival.

Resource sharing, co-operations and networking for survival

The International Federation of Library Association's (IFLA) ultimate aim is the Universal Access to Information (UAI). The aim is to improve access of publications by increasing the availability and speed of interlending services and by developing simple and efficient procedures. It is expected that every one who has need for any published document can obtain a copy irrespective of his or her domicility.

It is against this background that a National Union list of Research Output and a National Theses and Dissertations Abstracts are advocated. The Committee of University Libraries of Nigerian Universities (CULNU), started in 1973 has the objective to advance the development of Nigerian University libraries and information system. They therefore are the hop of resource sharing among Nigerian Universities.

A research collection department in each University library whose main function would be a yearly compilation of University Research Findings, Abstracts, of Theses and dissertations passed by the University Senate is proposed. Each yearly compilation would be collated at CULNU meetings, and distributed to members of the university community.

By so doing, all research, theses and dissertations conducted in one university, would be made known to others on a yearly basis. Duplication would be checked and the research output of the Nigeria university system could be quantified periodically.

All efforts at efficient resource sharing in Nigeria seem to have come to naught. Most projects lie either on the drawing board or are half completed. Library co-operation exists only informally based on goodwill of one library to another. It lacks legal support provided by formal agreement. Union categories, the bedrock of most co-operative efforts are almost non-existent for collections other than serials.

Ubogu, Okoh, Alimole and Eytayo (1992) advanced reasons for failure of efforts at resource sharing. The most significant of them are lack of experimentation and computer illiteracy. For example, the National Library of Nigeria acquired a micro-computer in 1987 which it has not been able to use, partly because it bought a faulty software package (Ubogu, 1990).

Suggestions have made on how to surmount some of these problems. Adebigba (1984) has proposed a distribution local network within the Ibadan metropolis for agricultural libraries. Chijioke (1989) also proposed a national cataloguing service which would facilitate production of printed cards, NUC in machine readable form. Batubo (1988) proposed a hierarchial network configuration for Nigeria with the National Library being the central controlling authority. He suggests that a central data base - Niger MARCH, be housed at Abuja while activities in each State be co-ordinated by a designated university within each State. Non of these writers addressed the issue of the creation of

a computerised bibliographic database. The first step towards a national computer-based bibliographic network is the development of bibliographic database. Once bibliographic data are available in machine readable form, the next step is to communicate and display these data rapidly in a form suitable for use at the local library level. This is the responsibility of the communication network (Ubogu Okoh, Eytayo, 1992).

Strategy for effective networking of educational research

The technology applicable to resource sharing is available in Nigeria waiting to be tapped. The basic component for the building of a productive and effective networking system is co-ordination. The ingredients for an information network are:-

- a standard
- telecommunication system
- fund
- organised body

Standards

For an effective co-ordination of a national union list of research output and National theses and dissertations abstracts there must be laid down standards for writing data either on cards or on computer tape. This will cut down the cost of translations to handle multiple formats which would otherwise result. (Silberstein, 1977)

Telecommunications

Modern information technologies abound in Nigeria. NITEL has established a store and forward message switching network called Computer-oriented Switch for International Telegraph COSIT) (Asouzu, 1990). The COSIT system is designed to provide the following services:-

- Message switching on a store and forward basis
- Airline and bank/Interbank transaction facilities
- Electronic mail services
- press broadcast
- future Office executive (FOX)

COSIT dreams have not all materialised. CULNU should take advantage of COSIT and develop the National Research Output Network within the COSIT system. Computer to computer interaction using leased telephone lines or local radio broadcasting is feasible.

Funding

The co-operative efforts of the individual universities, NUC and NITEL are called in order to be able to obtain adequate funds for meaningful work. A proposal for the design and building of a bibliographic database including bibliographic, authority and location records should be funded by the Research and post Graduate Development department of the National Universities Commission (NUC)

CONCLUSION

This paper has tried to match the huge government investment on Nigeria universities and their research input towards the improvement and hence survival of the educational system. It has tried to highlight the purpose of research and why research findings should be co-ordinated and publicised for use by other universities. The need for resource sharing, co-operation and networking has been raised and strategies for effective networking of educational research advanced.

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