

SHELVING EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS: A THREAT TO INNOVATION IN NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

This study specifically investigated some of the barriers to effective utilization of research findings for innovation in the society and strategies that would facilitate effective utilization of research findings for innovation in the society. The Descriptive Survey design was adopted for this study. Two hundred and twenty (220) Lecturers (from the rank of lecturer one to professor) of the University of Ilorin were randomly selected for this study. A researchers' designed questionnaire titled "Shelving Educational Research Findings Questionnaire" (SRFQ) with Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.73 was used to obtain the data for this study. Analysis of data was carried out using descriptive statistics. Findings showed that inaccessibility of research findings, organizational factors and research funding were the major barriers to effective utilization of research findings for innovation in the society. It was also revealed that organizing training workshop/seminar to communicate and demonstrate research findings to the stakeholders are the main strategies to facilitate effective utilization of research findings for innovation in the society. Based on these findings, collaboration between researchers and end users as well as development of a good network to disseminate research findings was recommended.

Keywords: Shelving, Research Findings, Innovation, Educational System, Questionnaire, Faculties, Stakeholders and collaboration.

Introduction

Research is fundamental to any country's development because good data and good research findings are essential in making sound policy decisions, smart investments and innovations. It provides the knowledge that is needed to understand what is possible, what is not, and the best way to plan and program developmental efforts. Nigeria as a Country is no exception to the need for carrying out evidence-based decision making which is informed by researches. In the broadest sense, 'research' has been defined as "an original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding" (HEFCE 1999:261), or as "systematic enquiry made public" (Stenhouse 1987:74). In another sense, Research is "systematic and rigorous, and provides explicit evidence, which can be assessed objectively" (Hammersley 2001:2). Reasons for carrying out research can be many and varied. They are not limited to satisfying intellectual curiosity; better understanding of issues; but also learning new things (Diem 2007).

Meek (2009) point out that internationally "there is a movement towards knowledge based societies whose cornerstone is higher education and advanced research. Thus, Countries have given priority to developing their knowledge base through higher education, research and innovation. It is imperative, therefore, that resources are committed towards achieving this important goal. Research outcomes should provide value to government and industry hence they should be aligned to the national priorities and to the developmental needs of society.

Research has always been conducted by higher institution of the World through its faculties, institutes, individual lecturers and students. This is because the main functions of lecturers in these institutions involved teaching, researching and community developing. But something is missing, which is innovation. This deals with how the findings from the research is been utilized.

Research is also done by the Universities through collaborations with international organizations and other universities on the African continent and beyond. The question asked by many educational stakeholders and captains of industries is, of what use are the findings of these researches, since Nigeria is still ranked among the developing Countries of the World? (Wilson et'al. 2003) from their study revealed that there is no central repository for research undertaken in various faculties in

the Nigerian Universities. Studies undertaken by different faculties are not always shared across the entire Universities, thus they are mostly unknown by those outside the faculty or a times the Department in which they are conducted. Thus, utilizing them become myth rather than reality.

In addition, for many educational researchers, it is assumed that the knowledge they create is utilized and has some impact on teaching and learning as well as brings about innovation (Tranfield & Starkey 1998). One of the goals of research is to generate new knowledge and establish an evidence-base within the profession. Most researchers also assume that they can provide information for educational administrators, teachers, curriculum planners, policy planners among others that can be used for innovations in the developmental process of the society (Oulton 1995).

Many scholars have stated that a numbers of studies in education lacked usage access which has become a key factor in their utilization (Champion & Leach 1989; Davies 1999; Elliott & Sarland 1995; Goldstein & Woodhouse 2000; Haug 1997; Moore 1995). In another study carried out by Cousins and Leithwood (2005) revealed that, the volume, applicability, ambiguity of research material and organizational factors such as bureaucratic procedure have also been identified as key barriers to utilization of educational research findings. Tranfield and Starkey (1998) argued that a key goal of educational research is to improve the relationship between theory and practice and they highlighted a numbers of concerns which include the issue of the relevance and the applicability educational research findings.

In the education sector, authors have suggested that lack of trust between researchers and users can be a barrier to research utilization (Slavin 1990;). Also, findings from empirical research confirmed that users often lacked the statistical skills to understand the results of research findings (Shkedi 1998). Thus, Slavin (1990) recommended that a more rigorous evaluation of research was needed and a wider range of research approaches should be supported.

In a review of literature, Kelemen and Bansal (2002) studies revealed that educational research findings fail to communicate with practitioners or captains of industries and may not reach sufficiently wide audiences. Also these findings are published only in academic, rather than practitioners' journals where the end users can have access to them, this in effect has had a serious impact on the use of research findings. This called for why Walter, Nutley, & Davies (2003) recommended that to address the issue of inaccessibility of research findings; it should be translated in a clear and unambiguous language for the end users.

Base on the challenges above, Hemsley-Brown and Sharp, (2003); Walter, Nutley, and Davies (2002) have identified the most effective strategies for facilitating research utilization by conducting cross-sector reviews and comparative studies, with the intention of learning from other professions where research utilization is well established. This paper examines issues that emerged from a cross-sector review of the literature which focused on two key questions: what are the barriers to educational research finding utilization and what recommendations have been made by educational researchers to indicate the ways these barriers could be addressed? Secondly, what were the most effective strategies for facilitating the use of educational research findings by education stakeholder and captains of industries, based on research evidence?

Theoretical Framework

Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory is consider as the theory that best explained this study, this theory provides valuable insight into the field of research utilization. It explains the spread of new ideas using four main elements: the innovation, communication channels, time, and a social system. That is to say, diffusion is a process by which an innovation (new knowledge revealed thorough research) is communicated through certain channels such as conferences, workshop, seminars among other over a period of time among members of a social system (refers to as society). It is not a single all-encompassing theory; rather it consists of four theoretical perspectives that relate to the overall concept of diffusion which include: innovation-decision process theory, the individual innovativeness theory, the rate of adoption theory, and the theory of perceived attributes (Rogers 1995).

The Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to assess the threat which shelving educational research

findings pose to national development and innovation in the education sector. Specifically the study investigated:

- a. Barriers to effective utilization of research findings for innovation in the society.
- b. Strategies that would facilitate utilization of research findings for innovation in the society.

Research Questions

Two research questions were formulated to guide this study:

- a. What are the barriers to effective utilization of research findings for innovation in the society?
- b. What are the strategies that would facilitate utilization of research findings for innovation in the society?

Methodology

The Descriptive Survey design was adopted for this study. The population of the study consists of all lecturers (from the ranks of lecturer I to Professor) of the University of Ilorin. The target population comprised of all lecturers from the Faculties of Education, Engineering, and Sciences. Thus, Two hundred and twenty (220) Lecturers were randomly selected for this study. Forty-eight of them were lecturers from the Faculty of Education, 32 from Faculty of Engineering, 122 from Faculty of Sciences while the remaining 18 were from the Faculty of Social Sciences. A researchers' designed questionnaire titled "Shelving Educational Research Findings Questionnaire" (SRFQ) was used to obtain the data for this study. It was divided into three sections. Section A contained lecturers' biographic information, section B contained 17 items investigating barriers to effective utilization of research findings on the following aspects: inaccessibility of research findings; relevance of research findings; quality of research findings; research grants and organizational factors. Section C was on strategies on developmental needs to facilitate utilization of research findings. A 4 point-likert type scale of Strongly Agree (4-points), Agree (3-points), Disagree (2-point) and Strongly Disagree (1-point) was used to elicit the needed data from the respondents. Expert judgment, from Educational Research Measurement and Evaluation Unit of the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin, was used in validating the instrument. A Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.73 was obtained. Analysis of data was carried out using frequency and percentages and mean and standard deviation.

Results

Information collected from lecturers on barriers to effective utilization of research findings was analysed using mean and standard deviation.

Research Question One: What are the barriers to effective utilization of research findings for innovation in the society?

Table1: Mean and Standard Deviation on barriers to effective utilization of research Findings

Barriers	Mean	Std	Rank
Inaccessibility of Research Findings	14.34	1.87	1 st
Relevance of the Research Findings	7.09	1.02	4 th
Quality of Research Design	5.97	1.65	5 th
Organizational Factors	13.14	2.62	2 nd
Grant for Research	10.94	1.77	3 rd

Table 1 shows inaccessibility of research findings as a major barrier to its effective utilization with mean score value of 14.34, while organizational factors was also consider as a barrier. The least of the barriers to effective utilization of research findings was quality of research design. This is an indication that, most of the researches conducted in education and engineering are quality one in terms of the designed employed, yet they were not utilized.

Research Question Two: What are the strategies that would facilitate the utilization of research

finding for innovation in the society?

Table2: Strategies that facilitate the use of research findings for innovation in the society

S/N	Strategies	SA		A		SD		D	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
A Provision of Support and Training									
1	Organizing conferences for both academic and professionals	122		55.5		98		45.5	
2	Organizing training workshop/seminar to communicate and demonstrate research findings to the stakeholders	132		60		88		40	
3	Create opportunity for sharing research findings	131		59.5		89		40.5	
B Collaboration, Partnership and Links									
		116		52.7		104		47.3	
4	Develop good communication network to link researchers and practitioners								
5	Researcher should work with users of research findings	97		44.1		123		55.9	
6	Agreement between researcher and the end users on the applicability of research findings	97		44.1		123		55.9	

As indicated in table 2, the results shows that majority of the respondents strongly agreed to items on strategies to facilitate the use of research findings. It is observed that 60% and 40% of the lecturers strongly agreed and agreed respectively that organizing training workshop/seminar to communicate and demonstrate research findings to the stakeholders is a strategy to facilitate the use of research findings. Out of the 220 respondents 131 (59.5%) strongly agreed that creation of opportunity for sharing research findings would facilitate the use of research findings, while 89 (40.5%) agreed to the same item/strategy; 122 (55.5%) and 98 (45.5%) respondents Strongly agreed and agreed respectively that Organizing conferences for both academic and professionals would facilitate the use of research findings. Out of 220 respondents 116 (52.7%) and 104 (47.3%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively that developing good communication network to link researchers and practitioners would facilitate the use of research findings. Also 97(44.1%) and 123(55.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that researcher should work with users of research findings and that collective discussion and agreement with the end users on the applicability of research findings would facilitate the use of research findings instead of being shelved.

Respondents were also asked to list other strategies that would facilitate the use of research findings. The summary of the suggested strategies are that:

1. Research findings should be published in the newspaper
2. National University Commission (NUC) should be involved in disseminating research findings
3. There should be more collaboration between the researchers in Nigerian Universities and the end users.
4. There is need for establishment of repository unit in the Universities where research findings would be monitored for easy dissemination to the end users.
5. Research findings should be made available on the social media like the YouTube, twitter, facebook among others rather than just in academic journals.

Discussion of Findings

It was revealed from this study *that* inaccessibility of research findings was the major barrier to effective utilization of research findings for innovation in the society. This finding was supported by the submission of Wilson et al. (2003) that there is no central repository for research undertaken in various faculties in the Nigerian Universities. How then would the end users outside the University be aware of the findings let alone of utilizing them for human development? Also, scholars like Champion & Leach 1989; Davies 1999; Elliott & Sarland 1995; Goldstein & Woodhouse 2000; Haug 1997; Moore 1995 submitted that a numbers of studies in education lacked usage access which has become a key factor in their utilization. This finding as well supports and concretizes Kelemen and Bansal (2002) submission that educational research findings are published only in academic, rather than practitioners' journals where the end users can have access to them. It was also found that organizational factors were another barrier to effective utilization of research findings for innovation in the society which could lead to human development. This finding was in agreement with the submission of Cousins and Leithwood (2005) that, the volume, applicability, ambiguity of research material and organizational factors such as bureaucratic procedure have also been identified as key barriers to utilization of educational research findings. Also, research funding was identified as a barrier to effective utilization of research findings for innovation in the society.

It was revealed that the most effective strategies for facilitating the use of educational research findings for innovation in the society is provision of support and training which include organizing training workshop/seminar to communicate and demonstrate research findings to the stakeholders (such as parents, education policy maker, captains of industries, the students), creation of opportunity for sharing research findings and organizing conferences for both academic and professionals. This finding adds to and improves on Walter et al. (2003) recommendation that, to address the issue of inaccessibility of research findings; it should be translated in a clear and unambiguous language for the end users. Failure to communicate research findings to practitioners or captains of industries indicates that it has not reach sufficiently wide audiences. This will have a serious impact on the use of such research findings. This called for why researchers have to collaborate and partner with the practitioners.

Recommendations and Conclusion

There have been many researches about the best strategies for addressing the researcher-user gap and the evidence appears to suggest that when researchers and users collaborate, develop networks for communication, and there is greater involvement of users in the design and conduct of the research, the impact of research and utilization of research can be increased

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