

# SURVIVAL OF THE NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

A Book of Readings

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## THE ROLE OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION IN THE SURVIVAL OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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### INTRODUCTION

Even though education has always been considered as the 'big brother' that enjoys the lion's share of the nation's budget, a substantial part of this money has been known to service recurrent expenditure like salaries to the total neglect of the general well-being of the sector. For this national conference to consider the survival of education as a theme, it connotes an observed distressed situation of education in the country. This paper intends to look at the place of research and evaluation in the rescue of Nigeria's educational system from imminent collapse.

#### **Definition of research**

Research has been defined by Best and Kahn (1989) as 'the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observation that may lead to the development of generalization principles or theories, resulting in prediction and possibly the ultimate control of events.' Simply put, according to Osuala (1987) research is the process of arriving at dependable solutions to the problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Based on the above definitions, all research involve the elements of observation, description and the analysis of what happens under certain circumstances. These activities are designed to discover facts and relationships that will make knowledge more effective.

Research endeavours have been broadly classified by Best and Kahn (1989) into three main groups:

- Historical research; this describes what was. It involves the gathering and interpretation of data about events of the past for the purpose of discovering generalizations that are helpful in understanding the past, the present, and to a limited extent in the future.
- Descriptive research describes what is. It involves some type of comparison or contrast between existing non manipulated variables in order to discover relationships existing between them.
- Experimental research is concerned with what will be when certain variables are carefully controlled or manipulated to ascertain existing relationships.

This paper intends to disclose how the different research type can be used to improve the Nigeria educational systems. Before that let us turn to the definition of the term evaluation.

#### **Definition of evaluation**

Alkin (1970) defines evaluation as 'the process of ascertaining the decision areas of

concern, selecting appropriate information and collecting and analysing information in order to report summary data useful to decision makers in selecting among alternatives." In the same vein, Okpala, Onocha and Oyedeji (1993) define evaluation as "a process of gathering valid information on attainment of educational objectives, analysing and fashioning information to aid judgement on the effectiveness of educational programmes." Furthermore, educational evaluation is adjudged by Brog and Gall (1979) as the process of making judgement about the merit, value or worth of educational programmes. Thus Sax (1979) observes that the major of educational evaluation is to make decisions about the adequacy of a programme, a learning medium, a teacher's effectiveness or a special curriculum. The application of these facts to the Nigerian system is another focus of this paper.

There are two major types of evaluation as identified by Scriven (1967). These are the formative and summative evaluation. The formative evaluation is carried out while the programme is in progress and designed to gather evidence that can be used to modify the product to make it more effective. Thus formative evaluation guides the development and implementation of a programme, a curriculum, a textbook or a teaching learning process. Formative evaluation therefore, is concerned with ensuring that the programme succeeds. Summative evaluation on the contrary, is conducted on the finished product to assess the overall effectiveness of the programme. It gives value judgement on the worth of the outcome of a programme which has been in existence for some time. Summative evaluation results are used in predicting the success of subsequent and similar programmes and as a point of reference for the improvement of current and future programmes.

### **Evaluation research**

The major characteristics of a research include; identification and definition of a problem, collection and analysis of data then interpretation of results and drawing conclusions based on the data. On the other hand, evaluation entails the process of making judgement on the worth of a thing. Thus evaluation research as defined by brog and Gall (1979) involves the systematic collection of evidence on the worth of educational programmes, products and techniques. Its main purpose is to help educators make decisions.

### **The role of research in the survival of the Nigeria education system**

Research has as its major aim finding solutions to problems. This attribute makes the use of research in salvaging the Nigerian educational circumstances an inevitable tool. For instance examples abound of many unanswered questions, such as: what teaching method is best for which subject? How many children of school age are in a particular location and what number of facilities (both human and material resources) will be needed to take care of this number? In order to solve some of these problems research projects should be conducted to give answers to these different questions.

Research emphasizes the development of generalization, principles or theories that will be helpful in predicting future occurrences. For instance, for us to predict what our students need to facilitate maximum performance in the world of work, there is need to conduct some research on the aspects of subject matter to be included in the school curriculum that will groom the students adequately for the world of work. This type of research will go a long way to establishing the much needed relationship between what

is taught in school and what the individual is actually needed to apply in his day to day living in the general society.

The application of such research findings will also help in the ultimate achievement of the outlined aims of education as stated in the National Policy on Education (1981) of the federal Ministry of Education.

Historical research findings into the past situations, conditions and circumstances can help in the improvement of current educational endeavours. For example, investigations into old programmes could provide very useful ideas on the improvement of current ones. An assessment of the problems and impact, of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) can be of immense help to the improvement of the current primary school system.

Current programmes can be improved upon if research is conducted to ascertain their problems, hindrances and modes through which they can be improved upon. An instance is the continuous assessment procedure for evaluating students performance, findings on limitation of the programme, facilities required and the attitudes of both the students and teachers to mention but a few, will help in the improvement of the programme.

The educational system in Nigeria can be improved upon if good programmes from other countries are actually tried out before being implemented. One of the major problems of our system is the practice of posing new or borrowed ideas on the Nigerian situation without acknowledging the difference in the two systems. In research, there is this concept of replication which allows for repetition and duplication. Thus any borrowed idea can be tried out to identify the influence of the Nigerian society on such programmes so that when used, this will be done with necessary and adequate adjustments to suit our peculiar circumstances. An instance that readily comes to mind is the implementation of the Introductory Technology programme in Secondary Schools in the country. It is evident that most of the imported machines and equipments are now lying waste in most schools because of the lack of a pilot study before the implementation of this programme. If this lofty idea was implemented in a few schools initially, the current level of wastage would have been curtailed and the programme would have been curtailed and the programme would have more beneficial to the participants.

Research must not always be conducted on a large scale. Teachers, school principals and Local Education Boards should be encouraged to get involved in small scale research programmes that will help them address some immediate problems. For instance, a Chemistry teacher can empirically establish the most suitable time to conduct practical chemistry lessons. This will enable him ascertain factors that will help improve the participation of his students in the subject and thereby improve their performance.

### **The role of evaluation in the survival of the Nigerian educational system**

The different definitions of evaluation indicate that evaluation entails the pulling together of necessary information about the different facets of education in order to aid pass judgement on the level of attainment of set down objectives as outlined in the National Policy on Education. For aims and objectives of Nigerian education to be attained there is need to carry out evaluation of the participants, programmes and processes of the system. The following are the suggested facets of evaluation that will aid the educational advancement of the country.

The major participants in the educational process are the students and teachers, others who are note include educational administrators, curriculum designers and text-book writers. To improve upon education in Nigeria, there is the need to assess and ascertain

the level to which students are benefiting from the school system. There is need to determine their attitude, involvement in and gains from the system. Their reactions and suggestions could go a long way in improving the system. The author strongly advocates for a greater student involvement in the decision-making machinery of the educational system.

Teachers on the other hand, are the executors of the policies and programmes that have been set down. To help correct some of the anomalies of the system, there is an urgent need to evaluate the actual input of the teachers into the training of our children. This input encompasses the subject matter; the method of delivery the assessments procedure; and the general attainment of laid down objectives of Education.

For educational system to be sustained, there is need to evaluate the appropriateness of the materials that are used. It has been observed that textbooks are recommended of the use in our schools without any prior evaluation of the adequacy of the book to the students. The problem has been compounded by the frequent situation has not helped the system neither has it been of use to its participants. It has only left our students more confused and incompetent. Therefore, there is the need to evaluate the textbooks and other related materials that are to be used in our schools.

Programme evaluation has not been given its due place in the Nigerian educational system. There is the need to evaluate new programmes to ascertain their effects, influence and applicability in Nigeria. Results of evaluation programmes could go a long way to improve the system. For instance, since the establishment of the special senior science schools there has not been any official evaluation of the programme to ascertain its weaknesses, strengths, problems and inadequacies. This situation has made the effectiveness of the programme to be founded on assumptions and speculations.

### CONCLUSION

The ailing educational system of Nigeria can be revived if inputs are sort from the different sectors involved in the working of the system. Research works that investigate the attitudes, perceptions and evaluation by the different participants in the system will be an enormous input to boost the well-being of education. Fortunately most of these researches have already been conducted in the various universities and research institutes across the country. The government may only need to collect these data and review them for use as appropriate.

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