

Research Productivity of Language Educators in Ondo State

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Abstract

This paper investigated the research productivity level of language educators in Ondo State and to investigate the constraints affecting it. The study adopted the descriptive research design, with a population comprising all the language education academic staff in Ondo State, Nigeria. Through Simple sampling technique, 213 academic staff were selected across the six higher institutions in Ondo State. The instrument used for data collection was a Questionnaire tagged: Academic staff in Language Education's Research Productivity Questionnaire ($r=0.88$). Two research questions were answered. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The results showed that academic staff frequently publish textbooks, chapters in textbooks, conference papers and articles in learned journals, while they occasionally publish co-authored textbooks, patent and certified inventions and rarely publish monographs, occasional papers, scientific peer-reviewed bulletin and working papers. The observed constraints responsible for low research productivity among academic staff include their inability to locate the most appropriate information resource in the university library catalogue (1.7), too much information resources on the internet (1.5), lack of knowledge of search techniques to retrieve information resources (1.8), financial constraints (1.9) and too much time needed to locate and retrieve needed information (1.50). Therefore, ICT compliance training for all academic staff, provision of research grants or funding, conducive/enabling environment with constant electricity supply, accessible internet bandwidth, accessible working ICT equipment as well available and accessible information resources both in the offline library and online library repositories were recommended.

Keywords: Research, Research productivity, academic staff, Language educators, ICT

Introduction

The wealth of a nation and the prosperity of her citizens depends on the research productivity of her academics, who are assigned with the roles of searching out problems as well as proffering solutions to them. These solutions are also expected to be generated in order for the larger community to benefit from it. In other words, the academics are seen as the knowledge workers whose major roles are to identify the information needs of the people and to proffer solutions as well as to generate and disseminate the solutions for the wellbeing of the entire society. The University is an epitome of knowledge. It is the engine room for national development. The universities in the country are said to be saddled with the tripartite mandates of teaching, research, and community service. In all these aforementioned three, the role of the academic staff in achieving these mandates cannot be underestimated.

It is generally believed that research, being a source of knowledge generation, occupies a critical position in promoting the prosperity of a nation and its citizenry's wellbeing in this knowledge based era for several reasons. University research is said to be a powerful

stimulus for economic growth and community development. Unarguably, it is the opportunity to generate ideas and prosperity of nations and the quality of life of the citizens.

Research is conceived as the arrival at a dependable solution to a problem through the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. It is a continuous process in which we search for truth or try to reach near reality. Research highlights new problems, collects data or information about those problems, draw conclusion and make recommendations. Researchers carefully investigate issues, analyze data, explain data and verify the facts. Research intends to correct mistakes or errors where observed, adds and advances knowledge. Knowledge gained through research is always objective and scientific. Research based knowledge is always logical, rational and based on experience (Iqbal & Mahmood, 2011). To Rashid (2001), research is said to be a conscious effort to collect information, verify the information and to analyse the information. It is also seen as an organised effort to solve the complex and teasing problems (Iqbal & Mahmood, 2011). It can also be described as the act of searching for solutions to identified

problems or needs and to disseminate such for the betterment of the society at large. Research would not be enough without its publication and spread to reach the large populace. In the case of the academic staff, research is a course dedicated to solving an identified problem and its publication in refereed journals both for the personal benefit of the researcher, of the host institution and the nation at large.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that research productivity is synonymous with research output. It therefore means the quantity of the production or output of research endeavours by the researchers within a space of time. Iqbal and Mahmood (2011) defines research productivity as the academic staff's publications of papers in professional journals, in shape of books or presentation of research papers in conference proceedings. In other words, according to them, research output refers to publications of papers in professional journals, books and articles or presentation of research papers in conference proceedings or displaying on the web or making its presentation on the television or radio. Jaunch and Glueck (2010), also opined that research productivity in academic institutions is reflected in the number and quality of articles published by the affiliated faculty. Research productivity evaluation is said to have a significant impact on tenure decisions and promotions in general, salary increment, and mobility in universities. In the same vein, Bassey, Akuegwu, Udida and Udey (2007) and Okiki (2013) all agree that most of the research productivity of the academic staff are disseminated through publications. Williams (2003) cited in Basak (2015) noted that research productivity is the research product and research effort which researcher produces. He further explained that the term "research productivity" in this context, means the publications published by academic staff in the research institutes surveyed which included publications in books, journal articles, chapters in books, conference papers and proceedings, technical reports, patents, scientific peer- review bulletin, occasional papers, monographs, co-authored books, theses/dissertations and Journal publications . According to Jaunch and Glueck (1975) cited in Basak (2015), research productivity is based on the number and quality of articles published by

researchers as evaluated on their 'publication count'

The importance of research and research productivity is enormous in a university environment. According to Bako (2005), research plays a critical role in promoting the prosperity of a nation as well as the well-being of its citizens. According to him, universities make important contributions to the growth and development of industries and government businesses, thereby promoting national and global development. Most of the research work in Nigeria is said to occur in Universities. Hence, according to scholars, research production has become essential for the success of the universities and the prospects of promotion for academics (Bako 2005, Anidu & Effiom cited in Okiki, 2011). Bassey, Akuegwu, Udida and Udey (2007) point out that quality research exposes academic staff to new information and sharing socio-cultural ideas with others. They also add that such quality research contributes to "genuine indigenous and sustainable development". In the same view, McCabe & Maccabe (2000) noted that all academic staff members can develop their research programme based on their research findings and later share their contribution to the body of knowledge with their students and others in order to develop their professional skills and make resounding impacts on their field and society as a whole. Furthermore, they state that research motivates the academic staff towards handwork, fills the gaps of previous researches and creates an opportunity for future researches.

According to Bassey, Akuegwu, Udida and Udey (2007) and Okiki (2013) , research productivity also enable academic staff to earn recognition in academic circles locally and internationally and also play a major role in the attainment of success in academic circles as it is related to promotion, tenure and salary. It is the research productivity of the academics that determines their status and their promotion and by extension, their remuneration. It is the research productivity of the academic staff that determines their self-worth in terms of career advancement and prestige. An academic staff with a low research output risks his promotion and career advancement when such is scheduled for one. It is really demeaning to have a low research

productivity. Research productivity opens the window for academic networking and research collaborations within and outside the researchers' country of residence. It boosts the morale of the researcher. The host institutions are not left out of the great benefits of research productivity as they are also ranked higher in national and international rankings based on the research productivities of their academic staff. According to Lertputtarak (2008), the tertiary institutions also benefit from lecturers' research productivity as it is not only a criteria for lecturers' promotion, but can also enhance a university's reputation and raise her ranking in the national and world ranking. This is because, according to him, whenever a university has higher prestige and recognition, the number of students seeking admission and are granted admission into such school will increase. This could also translate into an increment of budgetary allocation for her internal development.

According to Popoola (2002), the research output of the number of academic staff's publications that appeared in refereed outlets can be used to measure the quality of the research productivity. It is important to state at this stage that the main criteria for ranking "world class universities" is not so much the volume of teaching, students' population, or community services, but research output. (Chiemeke, Longe, Longe & Shaib (2009). Cetto (as cited in Chiemeke, Longe, Longe & Shaib 2009) posits that one index for measuring research is the number and quality of published works by Nigerians in international journals, and by the world distribution of active serial titles emanating from the universities, which contributes to the generation, dissemination, and application of scientific knowledge for development in Nigeria and beyond. Without doubt, scholarly and research driven education earnestly starts at graduate school. Consequently, academic staff in graduate schools can only foster knowledge acquisition of graduate students to their level of interest and achievement in research productivity. The research findings of academics in each university published constitute research productivity. Hence, the research productivity of academic staff of universities is very vital for assessment (Kpolovie & Onoshagbegbe, 2017). Therefore, having realized that research is the bedrock of

development, countries commit tremendous efforts and funds to research in the bid to develop economically, socially and technologically. (Simisaye and Popoola, 2019).

Iqbal & Mahmood (2011) carried out a study which was aimed at finding out the causes of low research productivity among academic staff at the university level. The population of the study was faculty members working at University. The Sample they used consisted of 232 male and female faculty members which were selected through the method of stratified sampling technique. Quantitative research methodology was adopted and data were collected through questionnaire. Data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using the statistical methods. Based on the findings, they concluded that extra teaching load, performance of administrative duties along with academic duties, lack of funds, non-existence of research leave, negative attitude of the faculty members towards research, lack of research skills, non -availability of latest books, absence of professional journals, less number of university own journals, are the major causes of low productivity which has reduced the research productivity of the university faculty members.

Anyira and Idubor (2020), carried out a study to find out about the poor webometrics rankings of Nigerian institutions in world rankings, its causes, implications and solutions. They found out that Nigerian institutions are ranked very low on webometrics. They affirmed that the low ranking of Nigerian higher institutions by webometrics and other globally acceptable ranking authorities if unchecked would spell doom for Nigerian educational sector and the products of these higher institutions in the global arena. Citing Ati (2017), they attributed the poor ranking to low visibility on the web and inactivity of scholars and researchers to contribute meaningfully to the world of knowledge via the web. In addition, they found out that in most cases, institutional framework for effective internet activity is deficient therefore most research works do not go beyond the four walls of the host institution.

However, as lofty and beneficial as research is, it is worrisome that it still occupies a low ebb among the academics. Several factors have been attributed to be the cause. Adias, Raimi

& Adias (2020), revealed that we have struggled with the reality of a dwindling education system which has mirrored the government of Nigeria as not having sufficiently provided the necessary resources for universities to grow in such a manner that they can serve as a development buffer for the country as well as maintain a global competitive position. The incessant academic staff's strike is also an evidence to show that the government seems not to be helping matters at all. The striking academics may not be so much encouraged to embark on research engagements as expected thereby adding to the dwindling research levels of the academics. It is a fact that this will also translate to the low ranking of our institutions in the global ranking come next ranking season. This situation is indeed one of the major reasons why Nigerian universities have continued to occupy the low ranking levels in global rankings of world universities. Other factors which other scholars have identified are low infrastructural development, epileptic power supply, poor internet bandwidth versus inaccessible internet, etc. Nevertheless, the researcher discovers there are still some problems which much have not been written on, which have been affecting the research productivity of the academics.

Research Questions

Two Research Questions were answered, namely;

1. How often do academics publish researches?
2. What are the constraints responsible for low research productivity?

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive research design. The population of then study comprise of all the Language academic staff in Ondo State, Nigeria. Through Simple sampling technique, two hundred and thirteen academic staff were selected across the six higher institutions in Ondo State. The instrument used for data collection was a Questionnaire tagged: Academic staff in Language Education's Research Productivity Questionnaire ($r=0.88$). Two Research Questions were answered. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

Results

Research Question 1: How often do academics publish researches?

Table 1: Showing how often academic staff publish their researches

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviatio	Decision
Textbooks	213	2.00	5.00	3.2958	1.00086	Frequently
Chapters in Textbooks	213	2.00	5.00	3.4601	.92886	Frequently
Co-authored textbook	213	2.00	5.00	2.3944	.74249	Occasionally
Patent and Certified invention	213	2.00	5.00	2.1972	.55677	Occasionally
Monograph	213	1.00	2.00	1.0986	.29882	Rarely
Occasional papers	213	1.00	3.00	1.0751	.28149	Rarely
Articles in learned journal	213	1.00	3.00	3.1268	.34734	Frequently
Scientific peer-reviewed bulletin	213	1.00	3.00	1.0188	.16718	Rarely
Conference papers	213	1.00	3.00	3.4883	.55466	Frequently
Working papers	213	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	Rarely
Valid N (listwise)	213					

Table 1 shows how often the academic staff publish their researches. The results show that academic staff frequently publish textbooks, chapters in textbooks, conference papers and articles in learned journals respectively. Furthermore, the table shows that academic staff occasionally

publish co-authored textbooks and patent and certified inventions. The table however shows that academic staff rarely publish monograph, occasional papers, scientific peer-reviewed bulletin and working papers. This in line agreement with the findings of Simisaye's (2020),

who found out that academic staff usually publish conference papers and articles in learned journal because of its advantage to their promotion and remuneration. He, further expounded that Journal articles and conference proceedings are the best source for the most current state-of-art literature in

any discipline and as such more importance were given to journal articles and conference proceedings.

Research Question Two: What are the constraints responsible for low research productivity?

Table 2: Showing the constraints responsible for low research productivity among academics

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
I find it difficult to locate the most appropriate information resource in my university library catalogue	213	1.00	3.00	1.7840	.45591	Agree
Too much information resources presented on the internet	213	1.00	3.00	1.5399	.50893	Agree
Lack of knowledge of search techniques to retrieve information resources	213	1.00	2.00	1.8028	.39881	Agree
Financial constraints	213	1.00	3.00	1.9155	.43696	Agree
Too much time necessary to locate and retrieve the needed information	213	1.00	3.00	1.5399	.50893	Agree
Searching for relevant materials are expensive	213	1.00	2.00	2.7746	.41880	Disagree
I retrieve records with high recall and low precision	213	1.00	2.00	2.9249	.26420	Disagree
Valid N (listwise)	213					

Constraints responsible for low research productivity among academic staff include: inability to locate the most appropriate information resource in the university library catalogue [x= 1.7], too much information resources on the internet [x= 1.5], lack of knowledge of search techniques to retrieve information resources [x= 1.8], financial constraints [x= 1.9] and too much time necessary to locate and retrieve needed information [x= 1.5].

This finding is in consonance with the findings of Simisaye (2020), who found out through the study he carried out that major factors hindering research productivity of academic staff in research institutes are family challenges, financial constraints, inadequate information accessibility, inadequate information literacy and inadequate motivation from employers. The study therefore recommends among other things the establishment of Special Research Trust Fund for

development of the research institutes, adequate research funds/grants for academic staff, continuous training programmes on information literacy skills, mentoring, improved research skills of academic staff and encouragement of collaboration and interdisciplinary researches among the academic staff in the research institutes. In addition, this finding is in agreement with Iqbal & Mahmood (2011) which found out that extra teaching load, performance of administrative duties along with academic duties, lack of funds, non-existence of research leave, negative attitude of the faculty members towards research, lack of research skills, non -availability of latest books, absence of professional journals, are the major causes of low productivity which has reduced the research productivity of the university faculty members.

However, this findings negate the finding of Okiki (2013) who carried out a study to assess

the research productivity of the teaching faculty staff in Nigerian Federal Universities, whose mean score on information resources availability ($M=2.41$; $SD=0.90$) indicates that information resources are readily available to teaching faculty members in Nigerian federal universities, however, low Internet bandwidth ($M=3.793$; $SD=1.162$) and financial constraint ($M=3.543$; $SD=1.257$) remain the major barriers.

Conclusion

Research productivity of the academic staff of higher institutions is very germane to the development of the staff, their host institutions and that of the nation at large. The high prestige that attends to high productivity cannot be overemphasized as such institution is ranked high in national and global rankings while the academic staff also enjoy promotion, increased remuneration, and research visibility which can open doors of opportunities for productive collaboration and networking with other scholars within and outside the researcher's country of residence. However, the research productivity of academics have been found to be abysmally low and urgently needed to be revived from its dwindling. Several factors were found to be responsible for this, like inability of the academic staff to locate the needed information from a pool of it, inability to locate the most appropriate information resource in the university library catalogue, too much information resources on the internet, lack of the knowledge of search techniques to retrieve information data, financial constraints and too much time necessary to locate and retrieve needed information.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations;

- That there should be constant training for the academic staff to equip them with the requisite ICT and research skills to enable them to be capable of identifying, locating as well as extracting information data from the pool of information resources on the internet
- That the academic staff should be

conversant with the offline library in order for them to be able to locate the information data necessary for their research needs

- That the host institutions should be encouraging their academic staff in order for them to be profitably engaged in researches and their publications
- That the host institution should also create an enabling research environment by supplying constant electricity, accessible internet bandwidth and ICT equipment
- That there should be a provision of research grants and sponsorship for conference attendance for their academic staff within and outside the country.

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