

Integrating Academic Research Activities in Education into Real Life Problem Solving: The Efficacy and Barriers from Lecturers' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The study determined lecturers' perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems. It determined the extent of synergy between academic research activities in education and its application in solving real-life problems. It also examined the perceived barriers confronting integration of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems and finally determined the difference in the lecturers' perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems. The study employed a survey research design. The sample size consisted of 150 lecturers from five faculties in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. An instrument used for the data collected was trial tested and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81 using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. The results among others showed that no significant difference existed in the lecturers' perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems based on cadres ($F = 0.632, p > 0.05$). The study concluded that the problem of incessant power failure, inadequate funding, corruption and mismanagement be rectified.

Keywords: *Academic research, Problem-solving, Lecturers' perspectives.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education has remained a vital tool in human existence. It is regarded as the act of acquiring knowledge and skills in different spheres of life. An educated person is believed to have acquired the skills of being logical, rational and knowledgeable in his or her dealings. According to [Adeyemi \(2012\)](#) education does not only give us the privilege of acquiring knowledge, it also helps to develop our sense of morality, ethics and the dexterity of presenting facts when necessary. No wonder [Fernate, Surikova, Kalnina and Romero \(2009\)](#) were of the view that one of the important challenges for universities and academic institutions today is their continuation as the backbone of the society; providing knowledge and educating young people to address complex global challenges. As equally reiterated by the [Federal Republic of Nigeria \(2014\)](#) the goals of higher education are: (a) the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper values for the survival of individual and society; (b) the development of the intellectual capability of individual to understand and appreciate their local and external environments; (c) The acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society; (d) the promotion and encouragement of scholarship and community service; and (e) the promotion of national and international understanding and interaction.

[Adeyemi \(2012\)](#) opined that for the goals of higher institution to be achieved they must be pursued through (a) teaching; (b) research and development of virile staff development programmes; (c) generation and dissemination of knowledge; (d) a variety of modes of programmes including full time, part time, block-release, day-release, sandwich etc and (f) access to training funds (TETFUND). Conducting academic research has been one of the major duties of lecturers in higher institution of learning to the extent that promotion can only be earned through academic publications. [Nwakpa \(2015\)](#) was of the view that research issues on economic development and recovery have been the major concern of the nations of the world. In the present global economic crisis, research development remains the tool for national socio-economic development, wealth creation and poverty reduction. Countries of the world with poor or inadequate research capacities will become poorer since knowledge creation is the key to sustainable socio-economic development.

The significance of academic research to the growth and development of academics in any nation cannot be overemphasized. [Anunobi and Emerole \(2008\)](#) were of the notion that research and publications are needed to improve problem-solving and decision-making in the workplace, to make professional practitioners critical consumers of the research literature, and to better equip librarians to provide optimal information services to researchers in another field [Powell and Mika \(2002\)](#); [Anunobi and Emerole \(2008\)](#). Furthermore, research has always been the main approach to problem-solving by all categories of professionals right from ancient time ([Boaduo and Babitseng, 2007](#)).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

University lecturers by profession must be acquainted with the skills of research activities through research publications so as to add values to both immediate and the global communities, however, it should be noted that most of the lecturers are faced with diverse challenges which inhibit their academic development. It is on this basis that the study seeks to examine the above topic.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The study specifically seeks to:

1. determine the lecturers' perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems;

2. determine the extent of synergy between academic research activities in education and its application in solving real-life problems;
3. examine the perceived barriers confronting integration of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems; and
4. determine the difference in the lecturers' perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the lecturers' perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems?
2. What is the extent of synergy between academic research activities in education and its application in solving real-life problem?
3. What are the perceived barriers confronting the integration of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems?

3. HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant difference in the lecturers' perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a survey research design. The population comprised all university lecturers of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. The sample size consisted of 150 lecturers from five faculties in the University (Administration, Arts, Sciences, Education and Social Sciences) that were purposively selected because of their interrelatedness. From each of the faculties, 30 lecturers, ranging from Graduate Assistance to the Professor, were selected using simple random sampling technique. An instrument was designed titled "Academic Research Activities for Lecturers Questionnaire (RALQ)" which comprised of three sections. Section A was on demographic variables consisting of sex, cadre, a field of study and number of publications. Section B consisted of eight items on lecturers' perceived efficacy of Academic Research in Education towards solving a real-life problem. Respondents are expected to tick as related to them from Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. The highest score for section B is 34 points while the lowest score is 8 points.

Section C was on the extent of synergy between academic research activities education and its application in solving real-life problems. It had five items which equally indicated that respondents are equally expected to tick as appropriate, ranging from Strongly Agree = 4 to Strongly Disagree = 1. The total score for section c = 20 while the lowest points are 5. Any score of an individual of 14 points and above will be considered high while 8 – 13 points will fall within moderate while below 8 points will be low.

Section D consisted of 10 items on perceived barriers confronting integration of academic research in education towards solving real-life problem. The items range from Strongly Agree = 4 to Strongly Disagree = 1. The highest score here is 40 points while the lowest is 10 points. The questionnaire was trial tested and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81 using the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, graph and one-way ANOVA.

5. RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems?

In order to answer this research question, data collected on lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems were subjected to descriptive analysis and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table-1. Descriptive analysis of the lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real life problems.

S/N	Perceived efficacy	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Qualitative education has enhanced through acquisition of useful skills, desirable values, knowledge, attitudes, ideas and competencies necessary for self-reliance	110	73.3
2.	Liberation from ignorance and pov	108	72.0
3.	Improvement in standard of living	110	73.3
4.	Provision of solutions to counterparty problems	90	60.0
5.	Improvement in educational practices	112	74.7
6.	Overall national development and progress	108	72.0
7.	Enhancement of teaching and learning strategies	106	70.7
8.	Curbing of societal menaces in our society	110	73.3

Data presented in Table 1 showed the descriptive analysis of the lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems in the study area. It can be observed from the table that 110(73.3%) stressed that qualitative education is enhanced through the acquisition of useful skills, desirable value, knowledge, attitudes, ideas and competencies necessary for self-reliance; and improvement of standard of living are the lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems. 90(60.0%) of the respondents pointed out the provision of solutions to counterparty problems. Also, 108(72.0%) indicated liberation from ignorance and poverty and overall national development and progress are also the lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems. In addition, 112(74.7%) pinpointed improvement in educational practices. Moreover, 106(70.7%) were of the opinions that enhancement of teaching and learning strategies is lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems while 80 (53.3%) buttressed the same account in the study area.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of synergy between academic research activities in education and its application in solving real-life problems?

In order to answer this research question, data collected on synergy between academic research activities in education and its application in solving real-life problems were subjected to descriptive analysis and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table-2. Descriptive analysis of the extent of synergy between academic research activities in education and its application in solving real life problems.

S/N	Extent	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low	25	16.7
2.	Moderate	47	31.3
3.	High	78	52.0
	Total	150	100.0

Data presented in Table 2 showed the descriptive analysis of the extent of synergy between academic research activities in education and its application in solving real-life problems in the study area. It can be drawn out from

the table that the extent of synergy between academic research activities in education and its application in solving real-life problems is high in the study area 78 (52.0%).

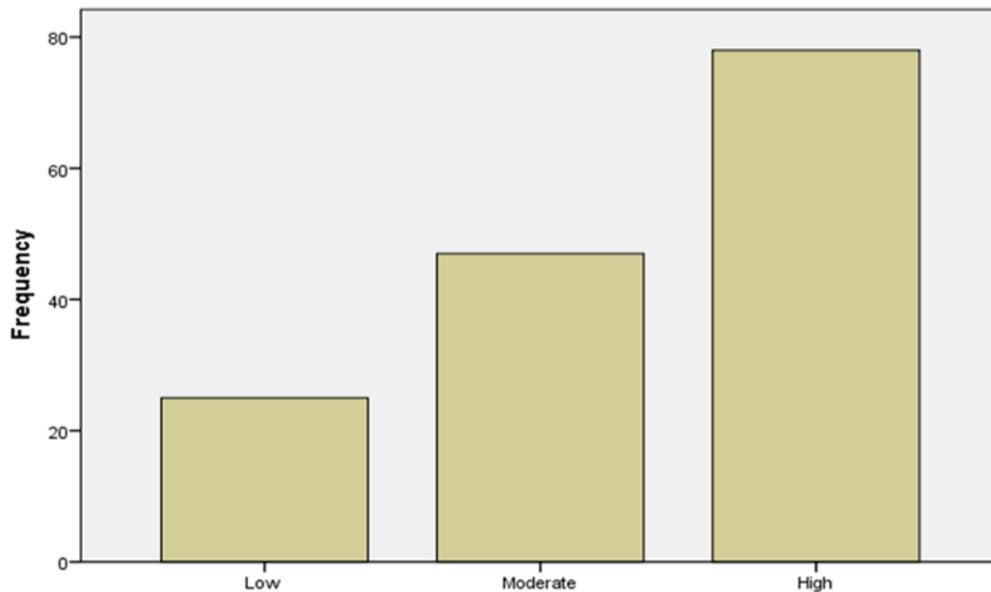


Figure-1. Extent of synergy between academic research activities in education and its application in solving real-life problems.

Research Question Three: What are the perceived barriers confronting the integration of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems?

In order to answer this research question, data collected on perceived barriers confronting integration of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems were subjected to descriptive analysis and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table-3. Descriptive analysis of the perceived barriers confronting integration of academic research activities in education towards solving real life problems.

S/N	Perceived barriers	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Political undertone	93	62.0
2.	Inadequate fund	105	70.0
3.	Ethical issues	85	56.7
4.	Lack of trust	90	60.0
5.	Environmental problem	85	56.7
6.	Lack of commitment	90	60.0
7.	Misplacement of priority	80	53.3
8.	Incessant power failure	119	79.3
9.	Corruption and mismanagement	105	70.0
10.	Poor quality staff	80	53.3

Results in Table 3 showed the descriptive analysis of the perceived barriers confronting integration of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems in the study area. It can be deduced from the table that 93 (62.0%) of the respondents indicated that political undertone is a barrier confronting integration of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems while 105 (70.0%) pointed out that inadequate funding, corruption and mismanagement are barriers. Furthermore, 85 (56.7%) stressed that ethical issues and environmental problems are perceived barriers confronting the integration of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems in the study area. Also, 90(60.0%) maintained that lack of trust and lack of commitment are perceived problems facing academic research activities in education while

119(79.3%) attested to it that incessant power failure inhibit academic research activities. 80(53.3%) showed that misplacement of priority and poor quality staff are perceived barriers confronting integration of academic research activities in education towards solving real life problems.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems based on cadres.

In order to test this hypothesis, data collected on lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems based on cadres (Graduate Assistant, Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer II, Lecturer I, Senior Lecturer, Reader and Professor) were subjected to one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the result is presented in Table 4.

Table-4. One-way ANOVA of the difference in lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real life problems based on cadres.

Source	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	33.605	6	5.601	.632	.704
Within Groups	1266.535	143	8.857		
Total	1300.140	149			

(F = 0.632, p > 0.05).

Result in Table 4 showed that there is no significant difference in the lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems based on cadres in the study area (F = 0.632, p > 0.05).

6. DISCUSSION

The results showed that there is an improvement in educational practices (74.7%) and qualitative education is equally enhanced through the acquisition of useful skills, desirable values, knowledge, attitudes, ideas and competencies necessary for self-reliance (73.3%). Also, there is an improvement in the standard of living (73.3%). This result tallied with findings of Nwakpa (2015); Enunemu (2009) and Ayodele-Bamisaiye (2005) who were equally of the opinion that qualitative education is enhanced through research activities.

Furthermore, the results revealed that the extent of synergy between academic research activities in education and its application in solving problems is high with 78(52%). This implies that most of the research findings are applicable to solving societal problems. These findings collaborated earlier findings by Anunobi and Emerole (2008); Boaduo and Babitseng (2007) as well as Powell and Mika (2002) who pointed out that academic research activities aimed at problem-solving by all categories of professional.

The results further indicated that incessant power failure (79.3%), inadequate funding (70%) as well as corruption and management (70%) are the major barriers confronting integrating academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems. This may be because Nigeria is still a developing nation and the identified problems are noticeable features in developing nations. This tallied with the findings of Wadesango (2014) and Nwakpa (2015).

The result also showed that there was no significant difference in the lecturers’ perceived efficacy of academic research activities in education towards solving real-life problems based on cadre (F=0.632, p> 0.05). This implies that all the lecturers irrespective of their cadres had the same view concerning the importance of academic research activities in solving real-life problems which equally correspond with the views of Fernate et al. (2009); Wadesango (2014) and Nwakpa (2015).

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that incessant power failure, inadequate funding, corruption and mismanagement are the major obstacles hampering academic research activities in education in solving real-life problems.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government should as a matter of urgency ensure that efforts are made in ensuring that problems associated with incessant power failure are curbed by providing functioning power generators in Nigerian Universities. Also, the Government should equally ensure that adequate funding is available for lecturers to attend local, national and international conferences where ideas could be shared and more knowledge gained. Furthermore, corruption and mismanagement should be curbed as much as possible on the part of the government and the university management.

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