APPRAISAL OF RESEARCH METHODOGY COURSE FOR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to appraise the adequacy of the preparatory methodology course in terms of meeting the needs of the students for whom the course was designed. In conducting the study, five research questions based on the needs of the students guided the research work.

All the 276 students who took the course in the Faculty of Education in 2012/2013 were used for the study. A- 36 item questionnaire was used to collect data from the students. The mean, mode, standard deviation were used to analyzed and answer the questions raised in the study. The findings among others revealed that out of the nine units of Research Methodology course, only three, namely Introduction to Education Research Population and Description, Research Questions and Hypothesis are adequate in meeting student's needs. Aspects of the course like problem identification, literature review, designs and statistical analysis require modification, in other to meet the needs of the students for whom the course was designed for.   However, based on these findings some recommendations were made.

Keywords: Appraisal, Research methodology, Undergraduate, Education, Curriculum development

Introduction

Higher education is of paramount importance for societal and individual growth and advancement. Inculcating relevant knowledge and advanced skills required to excel in a modern society higher education provides the human resources necessary for leadership, management, business and professional positions. Yizengaw (2003) opined that the

institutions also serve as the major research establishments that generate, adopt and disseminate knowledge. In Nigeria, universities are established to provide people access to knowledge as well as tools for increasing and diversifying their knowledge.

Research methodology in education is a course designed for the undergraduate students in the faculty of education. It is a basic requirement for students and they are expected to do the course in the penultimate year to enable them acquires the necessary research tools for handling the undergraduate project work. The course also was designed to help students solve practical problems in education as they get into the world of work. Research methodology will expand the productivity, capacity and competitiveness of students. Today, the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, more interdependent and increasingly a globalized village, this makes it even more critical for students.

Unesco (1998) asserted that the 20th century's scientific and technological achievements were due, in large part, to the growth of higher education and immense contribution and endeavour of the personnel trained within it. Without adequate high education and research institutions providing a critical mass of skilled and educated people, no country can ensure genuine sustainable development.

Students who enroll in Research Methodology course learn the basic concept, principles and ideas inherent in the course including the following:

- ability to identity research problem
- competency in generating related theoretical framework ;
- skills in designing and conducting the research;
- illustration, application and interpretation of those statistical methods which are more useful in the solution of research problems in education, provision of a background to the techniques upon which advanced courses in statistical theory and methodology may be based and
- illustration using actual research problems with emphasis on interpretation and application.

Considering the above objectives of the course and the content, one may draw a hasty conclusion that the Research Methodology Programme is adequate to meeting the student's needs. This appears to be a wrong conclusion or assumption, if one realizes that a lot of changes have taken place in the society especially in the education sector ever since the course was designed.

As society advances in development, societal and individual needs change. Technological changes also impact on the needs of the society and individual. Although the contribution of higher education to knowledge acquisition was laudable in many respects, in Nigeria, its impact is not

earnestly and fully felt in the development efforts of the country. With their out of date orientation and worn out traditions, higher education curriculum in Nigeria appears to have deprived the country of the opportunity of getting out of poverty and under development. This mainly refers to their less than ideal involvement and lack of concerted efforts towards change (Yizengaw, 2003).

As the society advances in development, societal and individual needs are bound to change. Technological changes have impacted heavily on the society and individual needs. The emphasis on entrepreneurship education and information communication and technology are cases in point which appears to be negated by curriculum planners. Even when entrenched in the curriculum, its contents are not adequately tackled by curriculum implementers. These developments do have some influence on our curriculum especially in the area of research, measurement and evaluation.

Based on the above consideration, some basic questions arise in relation to the adequacy of the Research Methodology Curriculum. One important question is whether or not the course is meeting the objectives for which it is designed. The argument therefore is to investigate whether students do benefit from the course in terms of the general aim of the programme, whether the course actually enable them to carry out the demands of their project and if the course would help them tackle problems in schools. Such investigation in form of evaluation is important for the improvement of the research methodology curriculum based on the students needs.

Statement of the Problem

Higher education in Nigeria is going through a decisive phase of reform and expansion. The accreditation exercise taking place in almost all the universities in the country appears to lend weight to this assertion. A recent Unesco report (2003) has also shown that several challenges still remained and it is not unconnected with resource constraints and consequent decline in quality of education and delivery. Nigeria and African in general, lags behind in scientific and technological advancement. Although with enomous potential and possibilities we are poor in competitiveness in the era of globalization and knowledge economies.

Based on the foregoing, the researchers conducted a pilot study aimed at finding out whether the Research Methodology course is meeting the objectives for which it was designed. The study focused on the adequacy of curricula content, text materials, extent of coverage of content and usefulness of the course in carrying out research project and solving practical problems in the classroom. The study revealed that 80% respondents (40 final year arts and science education students) indicated that text materials are not

adequate, 70% indicated that is adequate, 50% indicated that the course was not adequately covered and 70% wanted the course to be modified to meet the needs of the students. A vast majority of respondents 90% indicated that the course is useful to them in carrying out their research project and solving practical problems in the classroom.

One is therefore worried about the findings of the pilot study. It is on the basis of this that the researchers were motivated to appraise the Research Methodology course to find out if the goal is being achieved in line with the students needs.

Research Questions
   The following research questions formed the basis for the study:
   1. How adequate are the various curricula contents of the Research Methodology course?
   2. How adequate is the time specified for the course?
   3. To what extent do the lecturers link the contents of the course with the problems the students are likely to encounter in their project writing?
   4. How useful will the course be in providing solutions to problems students are likely to encounter in the field?
   5. What aspect of the course require modification or changes

Research Method:
Area of the Study
      The study was carried out in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka Campus, specifically in the Faculty of Education.

Design of the Study
      This was a comparative survey action research.

Population of the Study
      The population of the study comprised all the final year students during the 2012/013 session who invariably took the Research Methodology course in their penultimate year. This population was made up of students reading arts education, science education, adult education, humankinetic education, educational foundations and library science education.
      The entire population 276 in number was studied.

Sample and Sampling technique
      No sampling was done. The entire population of 276 students was studied. In other words, the population was the same as the sample of the study.

Instrument for data Collection

For the purpose of data collection for the study 36 item questionnaire was used. It was structured into six parts. The first part sought information about the personal characteristics of the respondents. The remaining parts which had a link with the various research questions were structured and the items were generated to suit and address the research questions which formed the basis for the research. The 276 copies of questionnaires were distributed in which 260 copies were collected which was 94%.

The questionnaire was given to some specialists in measurement and evaluation as education psychology for content validation before its final administration. The data collected for the study were analysed using mean, mode and standard deviation. Cut-off point was established at 2.5 and the range for the mean for an item was set thus:

Mean	Decision
4.00	Very adequate/ very useful
3.00 – 3.99	Adequate / useful
2.00 – 2.99	fairly adequate / fairly useful
1.00 – 1.99	not adequate / not useful

Results

The results for the study were presented thus:

Research Question I. How adequate are the various curricula contents of the Research Methodology course?

Table I. Adequacy of the contents Research Methodology course as perceived by the students.

Items	Mean	Standard	Remark
1. Introduction to Education Research	3.28	0.81	*
2. Problem Identification	2.85	1.00	*
3. Review of Literature	2.95	0.99	*
4. Research questions and Hypothesis	3.07	0.92	*
5. Population and sample description	3.01	0.92	*
6. Research plans and designs	2.73	1.07	*
7. Instruments for data collection	2.95	0.98	
8. Data analysis	2.83	1.05	
9. Method of writing Research report and proposal	2.60	1.10	

* Adequate

Table I. revealed that the mean scores items of1,4,& 5 are adequate because their mean scores falls between the scales of 4 and 3. hence, the following contents of Research were deemed adequate: Introduction to

Education Research, Research Questions and Hypothesis and Population and Sample Description. Others were just fairly adequate.

Research Question 2. How adequate is the time specified for the course?

Table 2. Time schedule for Research Methodology course as perceived by the students.

Items	X	SD	Remark
1. Sequencing of lectures for the course	2.97	1.01	
2. Periods in the week for lectures	2.53	0.91	
3. Length of hours allocated to the course	2.68	0.91	
4. The time for the lectures e.g day, noon, night etc	2.21	0.95	

Table 2. Shows that mean scores of all the items fall between the scales of 3 and 2. This is an indication that the time schedule for Research Methodology course is just fairly adequate.

Research Question 3. To what extent do lecturers of the course link the course with the problems students are likely to encounter in their project?.

Table 3. Link between Research Methodology contents and problems students encounter in their project.

Items	X	SD	Remark
1.They link between content and project requirement	2.65	1.00	
2. Link between content and identification of problem	2.50	0.96	
3. Link between content and review of literature	2.67	0.98	
4.Link between content and design of study	2.55	0.95	
5.Link between content and statistical analysis	2.50	1.06	
6.Link between content and 7.Writing research report and proposal	240	1.02	

Table 3. Shows that the whole items on the table fall between the scales of 3 & 2. Hence, the table depicts that lecturers of Research Methodology course do fairly establish ink between contents of the course and problems the students encounter in all the aspects of the course.

Research Question 4. How useful will the course be in the solution of the Problem students are likely to encounter in the field?

Table 4. Usefulness of Research Methodology course in providing solution to problems students are likely to encounter in the field.

Items	X	SD	Remark
1. Grading students work	2.97	1.04	
2. Writing class report	2.78	1.12	
3. Keeping the class register	2.55	1.12	
4. Interviewing students to find out problems	2.96	1.00	
5. Observation of students and keeping inventory	2.90	1.06	
6. Keeping and recording data about students	3.06	1.00	*
7. Testing and measuring students in terms of performance	3.08	1.00	*
8. Questioning students	2.78	1.06	
9. Using ICT devices to access information	3.04	1.00	*

* Useful

Table 4. Shows that items 6,7, & 9 are useful to the students concerning likely problems they may encounter in the field, such fact are: keeping and recording data about students, testing and measuring students performance and using ICT devices to access information.

Research Question 5. What aspects of the course requires modification or change in order of rank.

Table 5. Aspect of Research Methodology course which requires modification

Items	X	SD	Mode	Remark
1. Introduction to education research	1.61	0.70	2	*
2. Problem identification	1.56	0.70	2	*
3. Review of literature	1.54	0.71	1	
4. Research question and hypothesis	1.56	0.70	1	
5. Population and sample description	1.48	0.73	1	
6. Research plan and design	1.61	0.73	1	
7. Instrument for data analysis	1.56	0.79	1	
8. Analysis of data	1.67	0.75	2	*
9. Method of writing research report and proposal	1.66	0.83	1	

- Requires modification

Table 5. Presents analysis of opinion of the students in relation to aspects of the course that require modification or change. However with a modal response of 2, the following course contents were identified as requiring modification; Introduction to Education Research, Problem Identification ad Analysis of data.

Discussion

The results of the study are critical and lead one to draw conclusions on earlier proposals by researcher on accessing the needs of students with a view to improving overcomes. The results did show that only three out the nine units of Research Methodology course are adequate.

This finding supports the view of Aguokogbuo (2000) that any effective or functional curriculum must be adequate and within the frame work or range of learners for whom it was designed. It is argued that adequate curriculum is one that provides for and effectively responds to the needs of learners at any given stage. This implies that in order to be adequate, a curriculum must be flexible. It demands and provision at any stage must be sufficiently broad and varied in relation to the characteristic of the learners at the stage, so that it can be easily modified when necessary (Emeruwa, 1981).

The findings revealed that the course will be useful to students in the solution of problems which they are likely to encounter in the field, especially in testing of performance as well as keeping and recording data on students. Summarily, this is the belief of previous researchers like, Nwanna(1981), Obioma (1987), Nworgu (2000) who argued that research in education has found application in the business of teaching and learning.

The finding on usefulness of information, communication and technology devices to access information collaborates the findings of Nwosu (2008) and (Udida, Udofia and Ozurumba, 2008). ICT provides a rich global resource and collaborative environment for dissemination of knowledge and information which invariably fuels research efforts of students.

It was gathered from the findings of the study that some aspects the course require modification inorder to meet the needs of the students. This was supported by Okeke (1981), Ndubisi (1981), Mkpa (1987) and Aguokogbuo (2000).

They all advocated a continual revision or change in curriculum from time to time through the process of evaluation. These scholars suggest that revision or change tend to reveal aspects of the curriculum where revision in due and necessary and when done brings about changes in objectives methods and content.

It is argued that no group of students in our school today is identical with last year's group. We make the same curriculum provision year after

year and for group after group and so fail to achieve desirable adjustments of individuals of their times. The implication is that at all times, the curriculum provision must be dynamic, flexible and sensitive to changing social and individual needs.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

The research methodology course should be modified or revised to meet needs of the students. When this revision is done, efforts should be focused on aspects of the course like problem identification, statistical analysis and methods of writing research reports and problems. These content areas appear to be problematic for the students. The review will afford the students more opportunity of grasping the contents and be more readily to apply it in their project work.

More time should be allocated to Research Methodology course because of its broad content and more practical approach and link to thesis writing. When more time is given to teaching of the course, lecturers can careful impact aspects of the course especially those areas where students tend to have difficulties. Thus, indept teaching and understanding of the course will be achieved by both lecturers and students.

Conclusion

The major concern of this study was to find out the curriculum needs of students on a program of Research Methodology. The undergraduate's final year students which were considered adequate for the study were the most exposed class to the course. The study suggests that a revision of the course is due, which must take into account needs of the students with a view to improving teaching and learning.

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