



Article

Improving the Utilization of Educational Research Findings in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: The Role of Faculties of Education in Solving Educational Problems

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Abstract: Research is one of the major functions of tertiary institutions and an important instrument for generating knowledge, addressing societal challenges and supporting evidence-based decision-making. In Nigeria, Faculties of Education occupy a strategic position in this responsibility because they conduct research into teaching and learning, educational administration, curriculum development, teacher education, educational planning, policy implementation and other challenges confronting the education system. However, the value of educational research cannot be fully realized when research findings remain in dissertations, journals, conference proceedings and institutional repositories without being applied by those responsible for educational policy and practice. Evidence from Nigeria has indicated that the utilization of university educational research findings by government and the private sector remains relatively low. This situation creates a gap between knowledge production and the practical solution of educational problems. The paper therefore examines the need to improve the utilization of research findings generated by Faculties of Education in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It argues that research should move beyond the traditional emphasis on publication and academic advancement to a stronger emphasis on research impact, policy influence and practical application. The paper recommends stronger university–government–industry partnerships, improved dissemination of research findings, increased funding for problem-oriented research, research-utilization mechanisms within institutions, capacity building in knowledge translation, and incentives for researchers whose studies produce demonstrable educational impact. The paper concludes that effective utilization of educational research findings can strengthen evidence-based educational planning, improve institutional practices and contribute significantly to solving persistent educational problems in Nigeria.

Keywords: Educational research; research utilization; Faculties of Education; tertiary institutions; educational problems.

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1. Introduction

Tertiary education occupies an important position in the development of human capital, knowledge production and national transformation. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria, particularly universities, colleges of education and polytechnics, are expected to contribute not only to the preparation of skilled manpower but also to the generation and application of knowledge for solving societal problems. In the university system, teaching, research and community service are widely recognized as core mandates. The National Universities Commission has similarly emphasized the need for Nigerian universities to establish a stronger connection between these mandates and national development.

Research is particularly important because it provides a systematic means of identifying problems, generating evidence, testing possible solutions and improving existing knowledge and practices. Through research, tertiary institutions are expected to examine challenges affecting different sectors of society and provide evidence that can assist governments, organizations and communities in making appropriate decisions [1]. Consequently, research should not be regarded simply as an academic requirement for staff promotion or the award of degrees. Its wider value lies in its capacity to influence policies, improve practices, develop innovations and provide solutions to problems confronting society.

Within Nigerian tertiary institutions, Faculties of Education have a distinctive responsibility in the production of knowledge relating to education. A Faculty of Education is an academic structure comprising departments and programmes concerned with areas such as educational administration and planning, curriculum studies, educational psychology, guidance and counselling, measurement and evaluation, teacher education, educational technology, special education and other fields connected with the theory and practice of education. Through these areas of specialization, Faculties of Education conduct studies on problems affecting teachers, learners, schools, educational managers, curriculum implementation, educational financing, planning, policy and the general quality of education [2].

The role of Faculties of Education in solving educational problems is therefore closely connected with their research mandate. Educational research enables lecturers and postgraduate students to investigate problems that affect the effectiveness of the education system and propose evidence-based interventions. For example, research may identify factors responsible for poor learning outcomes, inadequate teacher performance, ineffective educational planning, weak policy implementation, poor school leadership, inadequate infrastructure, examination malpractice, low student engagement and other challenges. When properly utilized, the findings from such studies can assist ministries of education, educational agencies, school administrators, teachers, private educational organizations and other stakeholders in designing more appropriate interventions.

Despite the considerable amount of educational research produced in Nigerian tertiary institutions, an important concern is the extent to which such research is actually used by organizations responsible for educational decision-making and implementation [3]. Akpama et al. investigated the utilization of university students' educational research findings by government and the private sector in Nigeria and reported that the level of utilization was not significantly high. Their study involved academic staff from Faculties of Education and specifically examined whether research findings were being used to solve educational problems and improve productivity. The problem is not necessarily the absence of research. Rather, there appears to be a disconnect between the production of educational knowledge and its application. A considerable amount of research may be completed, assessed and published without reaching policymakers, school administrators, teachers, education agencies and private organizations in a form that can easily be understood and applied. Some findings remain in postgraduate dissertations, academic journals, conference proceedings and institutional repositories, while the problems investigated continue to persist. Recent national discussions have also highlighted the broader concern that research outputs from Nigerian tertiary institutions frequently remain underutilized rather than being converted into practical solutions. In January 2026, the Federal Government unveiled a National Research-to-Commercialisation Policy framework specifically aimed at translating research outputs into economic, industrial and social value, while acknowledging the underutilization of research outcomes [4].

The weak utilization of educational research findings has serious implications for the Nigerian education system. When research evidence is not incorporated into policy and practice, policymakers may continue to depend on assumptions, political considerations, routine administrative practices or information that does not adequately reflect current educational realities. Similarly, schools and other educational organizations may continue using conventional approaches even when research has identified more effective alternatives. The situation also reduces the return on resources invested in educational research because the knowledge generated does not produce

corresponding improvements in educational outcomes.

The concern is therefore not simply how much research Faculties of Education produce but also what happens to the knowledge after the research has been completed. The effectiveness of a research system should increasingly be considered in terms of its ability to connect knowledge production with educational decision-making and problem-solving [5]. Researchers need to understand the problems faced by education stakeholders, while policymakers and practitioners need effective mechanisms for accessing and interpreting research evidence. The relationship should consequently be viewed as a two-way process in which researchers and users of research interact throughout the research and application cycle. This situation provides the justification for the present paper. The paper is premised on the argument that the research mandate of Faculties of Education cannot be fully achieved when research findings are produced but are not adequately utilized. There is therefore a need to shift attention from research output alone to research utilization and impact. The paper seeks to examine ways through which research findings generated by Faculties of Education can be better connected to public and private institutions responsible for educational policy, planning, management and service delivery.

The Cornell Legal Information Institute defines *research findings* as the results of a study or assessment. From this perspective, research findings constitute the outcomes obtained after a systematic investigation has been conducted. They provide answers to the issues that motivated the study and represent the principal knowledge generated by the research process (International Institute for Educational Planning. (n.d). The World Health Organization (WHO) describes evidence broadly as findings from research and other forms of knowledge that can provide a useful basis for decision-making [6]. This definition emphasizes the practical dimension of research findings: findings become particularly valuable when they provide credible evidence that can guide decisions, policies and programmes. Hassan explains research findings as the patterns, relationships, differences, themes, estimates, explanations or other outcomes identified through systematic analysis of research data. This definition distinguishes findings from raw data because findings are produced through analytical processes and are expected to respond to the research questions or objectives. The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO) demonstrates the policy-oriented nature of research findings by describing research findings as providing policymakers and governments with options for designing and improving policies. In education, therefore, research findings can be understood as evidence generated through systematic investigation and presented in a form that can help stakeholders understand educational problems and determine appropriate interventions.

The OECD explains evidence-informed policymaking as a process in which statistics, data, research evidence and evaluations are considered before decisions are made about public policies and programmes. Based on this perspective, research findings can be defined as systematically generated knowledge that provides evidence for understanding problems, evaluating alternatives and making informed decisions. For the purpose of this paper, research findings are the evidence-based results, discoveries, patterns and conclusions generated from the systematic analysis and interpretation of data collected during a research study, which can be used to explain problems, improve practices, formulate policies and support decision-making [7], [8]. Research findings refer to the knowledge, results, patterns, relationships, explanations or conclusions that emerge after data collected during a research study have been systematically analysed and interpreted. They represent what the researcher has discovered in response to the research questions, objectives or hypotheses. Research findings are therefore different from raw data because they are based on analysis and provide evidence that can be used to understand a problem or make informed decisions. A research-methods source similarly describes findings as outcomes supported by analysed evidence that address the questions or objectives of a study [9], [10].

2. Methodology

Benefits of Research Findings

Research Findings Support Evidence-Based Decision-Making

One of the major benefits of research findings is that they provide evidence for making informed decisions. Government agencies, tertiary institutions, schools, private organizations and other stakeholders can use research findings to understand the nature and causes of problems before deciding on appropriate interventions. Instead of relying entirely on assumptions, personal opinions or traditional practices, decision-makers can examine evidence generated through systematic investigation. The OECD emphasizes that evidence-informed policymaking involves consulting research evidence, statistics, data and evaluations before planning, implementing or changing public policies and programmes. In Nigerian education, for example, findings from studies on teacher effectiveness, curriculum implementation, school funding or students' learning outcomes can help policymakers identify areas requiring intervention. This makes research findings an important foundation for rational educational planning and decision-making.

Research Findings Help to Solve Educational and Societal Problems

Research findings provide possible explanations and solutions to problems affecting individuals, institutions and society. Researchers investigate specific problems, collect relevant information and analyse the evidence to identify factors responsible for the problems and possible ways of addressing them. When the findings are properly utilized, they can contribute to the development of new programmes, interventions and practices. This is particularly important for Faculties of Education in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Research findings can provide solutions to problems relating to poor academic performance, inadequate teacher preparation, curriculum implementation, educational planning, school leadership, educational technology, inclusive education and other challenges. UNESCO's current work on the science of learning similarly emphasizes the importance of connecting research production with evidence-based educational policy, planning and implementation.

Research Findings Improve Policies and Programmes

Another important benefit is that research findings can contribute to the development, review and improvement of policies and programmes. Policymakers require reliable information to determine whether an existing programme is achieving its intended objectives and whether modifications are necessary. Research can provide evidence about what works, what does not work and under what circumstances a particular intervention is effective. The WHO notes that evidence-informed decision-making involves identifying, appraising and mobilizing the best available evidence to support effective policies and programmes. In education, research findings can therefore help governments and educational institutions formulate policies that are more responsive to actual conditions rather than policies based solely on assumptions.

Research Findings Improve Professional and Institutional Practices

Research findings can also improve the way professionals and institutions perform their responsibilities. Teachers, school administrators, educational planners, counsellors and other education professionals can use research evidence to review existing practices and adopt approaches that have demonstrated greater effectiveness. Research findings can introduce new ideas, techniques, methods and approaches to professional practice. For instance, findings from research on teaching strategies can help teachers select more effective instructional approaches, while findings on school leadership can assist principals and educational managers in improving institutional administration. UNESCO's work on research and education highlights the importance of creating feedback between scientific research, policymakers and education practitioners so that research can improve curriculum, pedagogy and learning environments.

Research Findings Promote Further Research and Knowledge Development

Research findings also serve as a foundation for future investigations. A completed study rarely provides answers to every aspect of a problem. Findings may reveal new questions, unexpected relationships, gaps in existing knowledge or areas requiring further investigation. Other researchers can build upon these findings, replicate studies in different contexts or develop new theories and interventions. This cumulative process is important to the development of knowledge because research progresses through the

gradual accumulation, examination and refinement of evidence. The use of research findings can therefore create a continuous cycle in which one study informs another and existing knowledge is expanded. Maynard (2024), for example, emphasizes that research synthesis can improve understanding of programme, policy and practice effectiveness and strengthen the applicability of research knowledge across different contexts.

Summary of the Benefits

S/N	Benefit	Major Contribution
1	Evidence-based decision-making	Provides credible evidence for informed decisions
2	Problem-solving	Helps identify causes and possible solutions to educational and societal problems
3	Policy and programme improvement	Provides evidence for developing, reviewing and modifying policies
4	Improved professional practice	Helps teachers, administrators and other professionals improve their practices
5	Further knowledge development	Provides a foundation for subsequent studies and new knowledge

3. Result and Discussion on Strategies to Improve the Utilization of Research Findings from Faculties of Education in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Strengthening Research–Policy and Research–Practice Partnerships

One important strategy for improving the utilization of research findings from Faculties of Education is to establish stronger and more sustained partnerships between researchers, government agencies, schools, and other education stakeholders [11]. Research conducted in tertiary institutions should not end with publication in academic journals or presentation at conferences. Faculties of Education should deliberately create channels through which researchers can work directly with ministries of education, education boards, school administrators, teachers, professional associations and non-governmental organizations [12]. Such collaboration will enable researchers to identify practical educational problems before designing studies and will also make research findings more relevant to the needs of users. UNESCO notes that the limited use of educational evidence is partly associated with weak links between researchers and policymakers. It therefore recommends stronger partnerships and the promotion of locally relevant evidence in policy formulation and implementation. Similarly, research on research–practice partnerships shows that collaboration between researchers and practitioners can bring educational research closer to practice by allowing both groups to contribute their knowledge and expertise to the production and application of evidence. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, Ogunode, Nwisagbo, and Amachree, faculties of Education can establish research advisory committees involving representatives of state and federal ministries of education, secondary schools, basic education agencies and other relevant organizations [13],[14]. Researchers should also be encouraged to undertake commissioned and collaborative studies addressing specific educational challenges. This approach will increase the likelihood that research findings are understood, accepted and incorporated into educational planning, teacher development, curriculum implementation and institutional decision-making.

Improving the Dissemination and Accessibility of Research Findings

Another strategy is to improve the way research findings are communicated to potential users. A major weakness of academic research is that findings are often presented in highly technical formats that may be difficult for teachers, policymakers, school administrators and members of the public to understand and apply [15]. Faculties of Education should therefore move beyond conventional journal publication and make research findings available through policy briefs, executive summaries, research reports, seminars, webinars, workshops, institutional repositories, websites and other digital platforms. UNESCO emphasizes that education research produces substantial evidence, but its uptake remains limited in many countries. It advocates improving access to locally relevant research and evidence syntheses so that policymakers can use them in planning and implementation. UNESCO also identifies accessible research and knowledge products as an important means of strengthening the connection between research and educational planning and implementation. For Nigerian Faculties of Education,

Oweikpodor, Onafowope, and Ogunode recommended that every completed research project could therefore have a short “implications for policy and practice” section. Researchers could prepare two- or three-page policy briefs explaining the problem investigated, major findings, implications and recommended actions in simple language. Universities could establish online research repositories where completed studies are easily searchable and accessible to government officials, teachers and other stakeholders. Regular research-to-practice seminars could also be organized to explain findings directly to those responsible for implementing educational programmes. Such measures would increase the visibility, accessibility and practical value of research produced by Faculties of Education [16].

Providing Institutional Incentives and Monitoring the Application of Research Findings

Tertiary institutions should also introduce institutional mechanisms that encourage researchers and stakeholders to move research findings from publication to actual application. In many institutions, academic recognition is strongly associated with publication, promotion and conference participation, while insufficient attention may be given to whether research has influenced educational policy, improved institutional practices or solved a practical problem. Universities should therefore recognize and reward research that demonstrates measurable impact. Evidence from Nigeria indicates that the utilization of university education research findings has been relatively low. A study involving academic staff from the Faculties of Education at the University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology reported that the utilization of students' educational research findings by government and the private sector was not significantly high. This suggests that producing research alone is insufficient; deliberate mechanisms are required to connect research findings with users and decisions [17]. Bello, Mela, and Yakubu, Universities can establish research-utilization or knowledge-transfer units within their research and development structures. Such units can maintain databases of completed studies, identify findings with potential policy or practical applications, contact relevant government agencies and schools, and monitor whether recommendations have been adopted. Faculties can also introduce awards for research with demonstrated social, educational or policy impact. Researchers whose findings contribute to curriculum improvement, teacher professional development, educational planning or institutional reforms could receive recognition during promotion and annual research assessments.

Increase Funding for Applied and Problem-Oriented Educational Research

Improving the utilization of research findings requires adequate funding for research that addresses practical educational problems. Faculties of Education in Nigerian tertiary institutions should be encouraged to undertake studies that respond directly to challenges such as teacher quality, curriculum implementation, educational technology, school leadership, examination malpractice, student learning outcomes, inclusive education and educational planning [18]. Research funding should not focus only on the production of academic publications; it should also support pilot projects, field trials and the implementation of recommendations arising from completed studies. Adequate research funding can make it possible for researchers to test their recommendations in real educational settings and generate stronger evidence about what works. The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO) emphasizes the importance of actionable research that provides feasible policy options and strengthens the relationship between research, educational planning and implementation. UNESCO also identifies resource mobilization as an important component of improving the use of evidence in education policy and practice. In Nigeria, TETFund, universities and other research-support organizations should therefore provide dedicated grants for research-to-practice projects. Faculties of Education could be required to demonstrate how funded research is expected to influence educational practice or policy [19]. Where a research finding shows promise, additional funding could be provided for pilot implementation in selected schools before wider adoption. This would help transform research from an academic exercise into a practical instrument for improving the Nigerian education system.

Build the Capacity of Researchers and Education Stakeholders in Research Translation

Another strategy is to strengthen the capacity of researchers and education stakeholders to translate research findings into practical policies and programmes. Producing credible research does not automatically mean that policymakers, administrators or teachers will understand how to apply its findings [20]. Academic staff therefore need skills in policy communication, knowledge translation, research synthesis, policy-brief writing and stakeholder engagement. UNESCO's work on evidence use in education emphasizes the need to strengthen the capacity of countries to access locally relevant evidence and use it in policymaking, planning and implementation. UNESCO's evidence-and-policy learning activities also bring researchers, practitioners, policymakers and other stakeholders together to address gaps between knowledge, policy and practice. Faculties of Education can organize regular workshops for academic staff on research communication and knowledge translation. Researchers should be trained to convert lengthy academic reports into concise policy briefs, technical reports, presentations and practical guidelines. Similarly, Akpama, Bassey, Idaka, and Okey and Ogunode and Odo, policymakers and school administrators should receive training on how to locate, interpret and apply relevant research evidence. Building these complementary skills would reduce the gap between researchers and users of research findings and increase the possibility that educational decisions will be based on credible evidence [21].

Establish a Research-Utilization and Knowledge-Management System in Tertiary Institutions

Tertiary institutions should establish formal systems for identifying, documenting, disseminating and tracking the use of research findings produced by their Faculties of Education. Many useful studies remain underutilized because policymakers, school administrators and other potential users may not know that the research exists or may have difficulty accessing it. A centralized research repository and research-utilization mechanism would make relevant findings easier to locate and apply. Evidence from Nigerian tertiary institutions illustrates this problem. Akpama et al. found that the utilization of university students' educational research findings by government and the private sector was not significantly high. Similarly, Ubulom and Enyekit reported that research findings and recommendations were not adequately used for qualitative decision-making in undergraduate business education programmes in selected Nigerian tertiary institutions. These findings demonstrate the need for institutional mechanisms that deliberately connect research production with decision-making. Universities according to McGeown, and Sjölund and Ogunode, and Ade could therefore establish a Research Utilization and Knowledge Management Unit within their research directorates or relevant academic structures. The unit could maintain a searchable electronic database of completed Faculty of Education research, identify findings with policy or practical relevance, prepare summaries for education stakeholders and follow up on whether recommendations have been adopted.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The production of educational research is an important responsibility of Nigerian tertiary institutions and a major means through which Faculties of Education contribute to solving problems confronting the education system. Through research, academic staff and students generate evidence on teaching, learning, curriculum, educational administration, planning, teacher development, policy implementation and other areas of educational concern. However, the production of knowledge alone does not guarantee improvement in the education system. The real value of educational research becomes evident when its findings are accessed, understood and applied by policymakers, educational administrators, teachers, government agencies, private organizations and other relevant stakeholders. Improving research utilization is particularly important at a time when Nigeria faces complex educational challenges requiring evidence-based solutions. Problems relating to access, quality, equity, teacher development, educational technology, funding, school safety, curriculum implementation and institutional management cannot be effectively addressed through policy intentions alone. They require reliable evidence generated from systematic investigations. Faculties of Education are strategically positioned to provide such evidence, but stronger

institutional arrangements are required to ensure that the evidence reaches those who can act on it. The central argument of this paper, therefore, is that educational research should not end when a project is completed or a paper is published. Its ultimate value should be reflected in its ability to influence educational thought, policy, planning, administration and practice. Universities should recognize research that produces demonstrable improvements in educational policy, school management, teaching practices, curriculum development and other areas of education. Regular research-to-practice forums should be organized. Faculties of Education should periodically organize seminars, workshops and policy dialogues where researchers can present findings directly to policymakers, school administrators, teachers and representatives of public and private organizations. Research findings should be digitally accessible. Tertiary institutions should maintain well-organized electronic research repositories through which government agencies, schools, researchers and private organizations can easily locate and access completed educational studies. Government and educational agencies should strengthen evidence-based decision-making. Ministries, departments and agencies responsible for education should establish procedures for consulting relevant research evidence before designing or reviewing educational policies and programmes. Researchers should involve potential users from the beginning of research projects. Policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders should be consulted when research problems are being identified so that studies address genuine educational needs and produce findings that users are more likely to apply. There should be continuous monitoring of research utilization. Universities and relevant government agencies should periodically assess whether research findings from Faculties of Education have influenced educational policies, programmes or practices and identify the factors responsible for successful or unsuccessful utilization.

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