

TOWARDS A REFLECTIVE NIGERIAN SOCIETY: THE GAP BETWEEN TEACHING AND RESEARCH

Dr. Nancy Agha
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki.

Introduction

The ultimate goal of educational research in Nigeria is to enable teachers, teacher educators and institutions make sound decisions about the educational activities and experiences that will best serve students. Research becomes valuable for teachers when it is applicable to their work with students in their classrooms. Such application, grounds research in practice and translates the theoretical into reality. However, the concept of applicability differs between researchers and teachers, it is precisely at this point that a distance between the two begins to emerge. Whilst researchers complain of undue demands for immediacy from teachers, teachers are equally dissatisfied with the ambiguity in which proposals from the researchers seem to be concluded, rendering them inadequate for solving their day to day problems.

The existence of a gap between research and teaching practice has been the topic of many discussions and in recent years many efforts have been made to overcome this gap. Education research has provided a great deal of data and has supported particular groups of professionals, especially those involved in curriculum development or assessment design. However, the question as to the success in reaching the central core of professionals- the teachers in the classroom remains open. Research is often seen by teachers as too theoretical, too idealistic or too general to relate directly to the practical realities of classroom life.

Individuals vary widely in their views about the nature of the linkage between teaching and research. The research – teaching gap has been known to exist for decades and whether or not the gap should be filled has been a controversial issue. Some researchers claim that the gap should be filled, while others argue that it is not necessary to do so since not all research is pedagogically motivated.

Teachers on the other side feel that instruction should have empirical basis while some others feel that research – based pedagogical implications are of little use in the classroom.

There has been a growing awareness and acknowledgement of the disconnect that exists and the challenges of making academic research more context specific and relevant to teaching practice.

Relationship between Research and Teaching

Teachers and researchers come from different paradigm; while teachers prefer a more normative and practical perspective, the researchers perspective is usually analytical and while the teacher is faced with seeking solution to particular situations, the researcher is always seeking to generalize.

To some extent, teachers view the work of researchers as situated at the theoretical level, whilst theirs is on the practical level. This might be due to the fact that researchers obtain results which in many cases refer to teaching which they do not experience and on the other hand, teachers very often act without being aware of harbouring any kind of theory, but rather impelled by practice.

Considering the research – practice and research – teaching gaps, Burke and Rau (2010) explain the reciprocal relationship between research, teaching and practice as follows. While collaborative research is desirable between academics and practitioners, teachers will not be willing to participate if they do not value research.

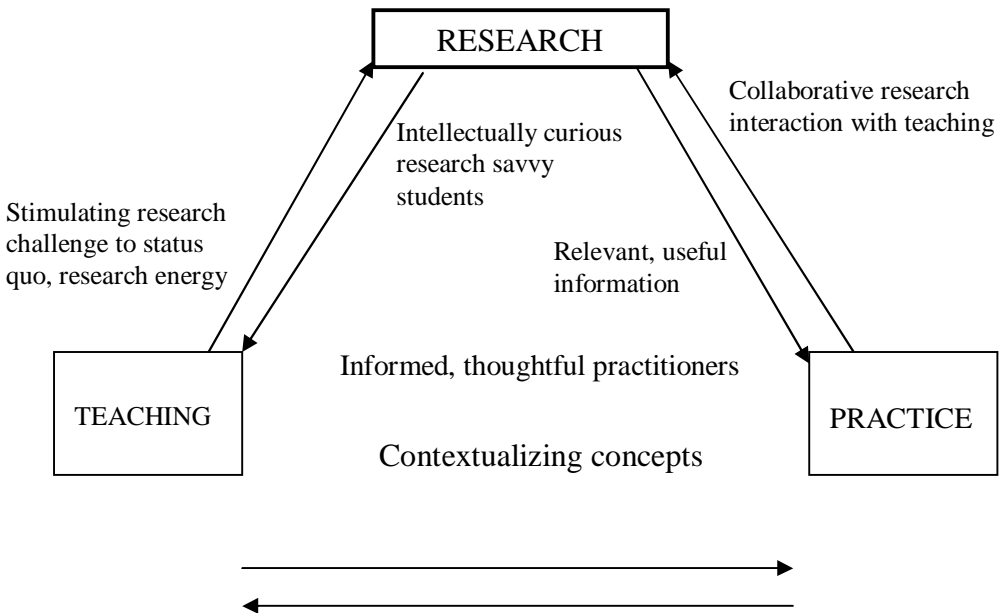
As Rugarcia (1991) points out that research and teaching have different goals and require different skills and personal attributes. The primary goal of research is to advance knowledge, while that of teaching is to develop and enhance abilities. Researchers are valued mainly for what they discover and for the problems they solve and teachers for what they enable their students to discover and solve.

There is a strong rationale reinforcing the claims that research should contribute to teaching. Research forms the basis of the content of teaching. Teachers who are active researchers are more likely to be on the cutting edge of their discipline and aware of international perspectives in their field. Teachers who are involved in research are more effective at instilling an actively critical approach to understanding complex research findings rather than passive acceptance of facts. Students appreciate teachers who

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present research that the teachers have actually conducted. This provides an authenticity to the presented material that differs from presentations by teachers who are only discussing the work of others in which they have no active involvement. The process of teaching the subject matter of a discipline forces academics to clarify the big picture into which their specific research realization fits.

Teaching and research should not be seen as independent activities. Moreover, teaching, research and practice should be looked at as integrated process that reinforce each other.



Source: Burke and Rau, 2010

Fig1: Narrowing Research Teaching – Practice Gap

The multiple influences showed in Fig. 1 can be summarized as follows: (1) The research-practice arrow represents how research can be made more accessible, understandable and relevant to practitioners. (2) The practice research arrow relates to how practitioners can be more involved in contributing to research. (3) The practice – teaching arrow illustrates how teachers and students can contextualize concepts to make research theories more relevant in the learning process, consequently teaching will influence practice producing informed and thoughtful graduates.

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The research teaching arrow emphasizes that research in its various forms enables teachers to introduce students to relevant and newly developed ideas, demonstrating the various ways of using research to evaluate workplace scenarios and thus, making the research process relevant to their future development.

On the other hand, teaching can influence research by stimulating meaningful research questions; challenging researchers' thinking and reinvigorating the educator's mind set. This reciprocal relationship seeks consideration of what research is and its purpose. From the students' perspective, some value the opportunity to work with academics in a one-to-one relationship while others dislike learning research skills as they do not see their practical relevance. For academics, research – teaching attitudes also vary, whilst some academics believe that teaching and research are positively correlated, others regard research as more important than teaching and vice versa.

Research also means different things in different contexts. While a general meaning of research outside the academic context is “finding out” information in order to perform a specific task, in the academic context research involves a systematic process of investigation in which the findings and methods are valid and represents a contribution to the existing knowledge (Griffths, 2004).

These different views cause misunderstanding and even inhibit the integration of research and teaching.

Researchers undertake research as a quest for basic understanding or with consideration of use or a bit of both. These scholars, deeply influenced by the fundamental tenets of basic disciplines, seem to strive for better understanding of concepts and ideas, rather than their applicability in practice. They tend to focus on rigorous analysis of concepts to explore inter-relationship among various concepts to explain a phenomenon, rather than on how the researcher insights culled out of academic research can be useful in the classroom.

The result of these differences in the perspective of the practicing teacher and the professional researcher is that many teachers tend to see research findings as addressing solutions to problems that are not relevant to their own day to day needs. Some of the findings of professional researchers that are published in scholarly journals are perceived to be remotely related to the real world of practicing teachers. The reason for limited relevance of these researches is primarily attributed to professional researchers who seem to be “out of touch” with the language, problems and concerns of

the practicing teachers. Hence the knowledge created by these researchers seems to have limited usefulness for practicing teachers. The implication of this situation is that, if the research findings are to be useful to classroom practices, practitioner-based questions must predominate. If research is to be used by teachers and useful in classrooms, it must focus on the complex issues teachers face on daily basis.

How can Research Inform Teaching

When research and teaching are both viewed as learning processes, it is easier to conceive at least conceptually how they can and should be mutually reinforcing (Brew 2002).

Consistent with Brew's (2002) focus on strengthening the research – teaching link, Dawson and Burke (2008) proposed the pursuit of research inspired teaching, instruction that draws upon and is grounded in relevant discipline theory and research. Incorporating existing research evidence in our teaching will help set the stage for increased student learning and use of evidence – based practice.

In research – inspired teaching, teachers share their own research studies, findings and work, when relevant. Markides (2007) maintains that “if you have communicated some of your research findings to your students, then by definition, you are doing relevant research”. Moreover, based on our personal experiences, the process of sharing one's own research is intellectually stimulating and invigorating for the teacher.

The communication of research findings need not be confined to published academic studies. Both teachers with extensive consulting and applied experiences as well as adjunct instructors with rich work experiences can share findings from field projects and corporate briefs they have written.

The role of a teacher goes beyond disseminating research to include being a facilitator in knowledge exchange. For teachers to facilitate knowledge exchange, they need to work closely with students in an inquiry and exploring manner. Classrooms in which students are asked to analyse and potentially implement effective research procedures will likely require a less autocratic and status based setting and instead support a more egalitarian search for answers and learning (Brew, 2002; Dawson & Burke, 2008). Although empirical data about the extent of research infusion into the teaching arena are lacking, some authors seriously question the extent to which discipline research infiltrates business teaching, while others believe it is more common.

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Research inspired teaching involves at a base level the transmission or dissemination of fundamental educational paradigms and established empirical findings. In research- inspired teaching, teachers share their own research studies and findings when relevant. It is strongly believed that students perceive benefits associated with lecturers who conduct research and that motivated students value those teachers engaged in research.

How can Teaching Inform Research

For teachers, a primary inspiration for generating research ideas comes from new courses because the process of mastering a new topical area reveals gaps in one's own knowledge base (Brew 2002). Serious consideration of and listening to student questions, reflecting upon research projects students engage in, explaining concepts to students and creating examples for classroom use can also stimulate basic research questions.

Teaching – inspired research more broadly includes the scholarship of teaching, in which teachers systematically examine teaching methods in education and how to make them more effective to increase student learning. Teaching can also inform the scholarship of integration (Boyer, 1990). For example, students could be assigned a course task in their major course on relevant topics in a systematic search to generate and document common themes and key findings. By pulling overarching patterns and results into classroom discussion, students (and teachers) can learn to synthesize what evidence – based principles have been discovered and possess a more comprehensive cognitive map of their various disciplines. Ultimately, with potential aid from the instructor and academic peers, students could generate a literature review that documents their findings and any gaps in the field.

Teaching influences research by stimulating meaningful research questions, challenging researchers' thinking, and creating exciting and energy around further research. It is hard to envision a research-practice bridge that is not supported by these important girders.

Views on Research – Teaching Gap

One of the principal justifications for carrying out research is to increase the stock of knowledge we can pass on to future generations. Thus the research – teaching roles should not be isolated and disparate.

Bennis and O'Toole (2005) advocate the use of a professional model as an approach to education, emphasizing an integration of knowledge and practice. The integration of knowledge and practice may be as simple as integrating cases, personal research and examples into classroom curricula or as complex as completely changing the way courses are taught. Rousseau, (2006) suggests involving students more in the learning process by applying knowledge, reflecting on it and deriving principles themselves rather than learning through lectures. Brew (2003) on the other hand advocates a more radical reconceptualization of higher education as a whole, focusing on academic communities of practice and a creation of knowledge that changes the nature of the teacher – student relationship. Such proposed changes in education methods would link research more closely to teaching and help to address the research – teaching gap.

Huberman (1992) in his study showed that sustained interactivity among teachers and researchers is likely to lead to more research utilization. When teachers and researchers interact repeatedly during the course of the research, the meaning and validity of the study are not negotiated by both parties. What this translates into is that researchers should work with teachers to develop research agenda.

Burkhardt and Schoenfield (2003) had argued this point and offered that greater emphasis on classroom based research would be more useful in understanding the role of contextual factors in teaching and learning.

Feldman (1987) reviewed the existing literature on the relationships between research and teaching and stated that research productivity is positively but very weakly correlated with overall teaching effectiveness.

Hattie and Marsh (1996) examined 57 studies and explored correlation between such measures of teaching as student evaluation, peer evaluations and self-evaluation and a number of measures of research productivity including numbers of papers, citations and grant. Their conclusion was that for teaching and research “the relationship is zero. In a subsequent analysis, the same authors sought specific conditions under which research supported teaching, but their analysis failed to reveal a single moderator to the general findings, leading them to conclude that the observed absence of correlation between teaching and research is robust.

Jenkins (2004) reviewed the literature through 2004 and similarly failed to find persuasive evidence that involvement in research improves teaching.

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Han (2007) argues against linking research to practice because not all researchers have practice in mind and the results of many studies are not validated enough to make claims about teaching. Chapelle (2007) states that pedagogical implication drawn from research including new and unreplicated studies should benefit the practitioners because insights from these studies can start new dialogues about practice.

Shapiro, Kirkman and Courtney (2007) have noted two types of gaps, the “lost in translation” gap (when relevant research fails to reach practitioners) and the “lost before translation” gap (when relevant research is not undertaken by researchers). Kieser and Leiner (2009) elaborate that “getting lost before translation means that scientific results are un-connectable and therefore untranslatable for practice.

Reasons for the Gap

There is a growing literature that explains the major reasons accounting for the research – teaching gap.

1) **Differences in Perceived Social Status between Researchers and Teachers:**

Steward (2006) points out that researchers generally receive privileged status and are regarded as experts on teaching as long as they engage in educational research. Teachers on the other hand do not receive an equal degree of recognition. Their knowledge and opinions are often undervalued despite their in-depth knowledge of actual teaching contexts and practices.

This unfortunate perception is due to the difference in how excellence is determined in research and practice. Researchers’ performance is evaluated on the basis of publications which are considered as a visible and objective measure of expert knowledge and excellence.

On the contrary, teachers’ expertise are evaluated on the basis of teaching. Excellence in teaching is not as readily visible as the number of publications a researcher has. Again, the quality of teaching is not easily measurable and not easily understood by the public or those who have no teaching experience. As a result, the perception that researchers are experts and teachers are not persists.

2) **Differences in the Way the Terms ‘Research’ and ‘Teaching’ are Conceptualized:**

The different ways in which the terms ‘research’ and ‘teaching’ are used are also key elements in the contested discourse about their linkage.

Boyer (1990) argued for a broader definition of research to go beyond what he called discovery scholarship to include ‘applied’ and ‘integrative’ scholarships. According to Colbeck (1998) the broader and more inclusive the definition of what counts as research, the easier it is to integrate it with teaching.

Research has its theory in particular its fundamental framework, and its practice, primarily its methods and development which in turn integrate theory. Teaching has its theory, in particular several theories (of teaching and learning) and those related to the teaching and learning of the subject in question and its practice.

3) **Cultural orientations Between Research and Teaching:**

A common interpretation of the divide between theory and practice, regardless of the field, refers to the differences in the cultural orientation of researchers and teachers. On one side, are the researchers, intent on the rigors of sound academic research but divorced from the ongoing concerns of practice, and who are dismayed about the fact that practitioners are not reading or using their research results. On the other side are the practitioners, concerned with relevance in terms of bettering their practice but not interested in theoretical reasoning, and who claim that research results do not address existing problems and practical needs.

Labaree (2003) attributes the cause of the gap to the differences in cultural orientations between researchers and teachers. He observes that the researchers’ cultural orientation is analytical, intellectual, Universal and theoretical whereas teachers’ orientation is normative, personal, particular and experiential. This difference creates a culture clash and misunderstanding between researchers and teachers.

When researchers make pedagogical implications, they usually do so in order to provide generalized information to a broad audience of educators using methods that are found to be systematic, reliable and replicable in quantitative studies. They are rarely interested in providing specific suggestions as to what works in different classrooms.

Teachers on the other hand, work in specific learning contexts, have in-depth knowledge about their students including the strengths, weakness, personality, interests and emotional states. Teachers are more interested in ideas that they can readily use in order to enhance instruction rather than abstracting suggestions.

4) **Separateness of the Research and Practice Communities:**

Often times, researchers fail to involve practitioners in the research process as meaningful and valued partners, hence they miss the opportunity to discover exemplary classroom practices that have the potentials for formal validation and widespread applicability.

Variation in opinion is also seen among teachers, but it occurs for a very different reason. Teachers usually focus on specific learning environment rather than wide range of instructional contexts. They form a belief of what works and what doesn't work and it shapes what, when and how they teach.

- 5) The limited relevance of educational research as perceived by practitioners (ie research is often conceptualized and conducted in settings that are different from the realities of teaching practice). Academic researchers in Nigeria seem to find themselves caught between the need to conduct sensitive educational research to ensure “relevance”, and the need to publish in reputed peer-reviewed journals to ensure enhancement of their professional reputation and the ranking of their institution.

The review process of these peer reviewed journals tend to emphasize methodological rigour rather than educational relevance; methodological rigour includes nature and size of the sample, nature of data collected, methods used for data collection and analysis and so on. This often comes at the cost of relevance of the findings to teachers, and causes a disconnect between researchers and teachers.

Osher and Snow (1997) suggest that the research – practice disconnect can be attributed to both cultural factors (divergent knowledge communities that are organized around discrete values, rituals and institutions), and structural factors (characteristics of practitioners that hinder knowledge exchange), as well as characteristic ways in which individuals (both researchers and practitioners) produce and employ knowledge.

Some research scholars apparently see the gap as driven by the structures of doing research. They believe in addressing a research problem, rather than its practical application and they do not and should not draw their work from convenient, unverified sources that may be “in vogue” – something they suggest their practitioner counterparts are more likely to do. By contrast,

these scholars present practitioners as seeing the origins of the research – practice barrier as being driven by the immediacy of their classrooms. Specifically, practitioners believe they have no time to access the limited research available and even when they do, they state that the research is written unreadably, and perceive it as irrelevant to their classrooms.

The research – practice gap could be attributable to the different agendas/pressures that teachers and researchers create and are subjected to. This can lead to default assumptions about the “other side” that can tend to create or exacerbate barriers rather than diminish them.

Waxman, Freiberg and Knight (1986), however, suggest that teachers are willing to use research, but it is not addressing questions that are important to them, so they resort to solving the issues they encounter on a trial and error basis.

Perhaps the issue of most concern is exemplified by reports that teachers are willing to use research to bridge the gap, but that the gap remains simply because they do not have the means, mechanisms or time to access the research that they know is out there but cannot be reached.

Most researchers are academically trained to develop or validate theories/frame works using scientifically rigorous data analysis tools rather than conducting problem solving research through application of available knowledge.

Researchers most often identify research problems on the basis of extensive literature review and at times through intelligent conjecture. Sometimes they refer to:

(a) a-priori assumptions regarding the interest of teachers or (b) topics which are most easily amendable to the scientific method of inquiry or to pet methodological techniques and (c) outright convenience.

They focus on creating new knowledge using valid tools and scientifically rigorous methods that are accepted by their peers. They rarely compromise with methodological rigor. This makes the results of their findings often irrelevant to the practitioner, with the real issue and challenges being faced

by them rarely researched. This gap needs to be addressed to make research more relevant for teachers.

6) **Intra-Professional Varieties:**

Researchers tend to focus on specific areas of inquiry that they do not necessarily know about or are not interested in. As a result, their insights from research findings tend to have narrow focus and may be indirectly linked to practice. Variations in opinion are also seen among teachers and these have also affected the results of many method comparison results.

Even within a single method, teaching practice varies considerably because of the differences in teachers' beliefs. Again, teachers differ in how they evaluate students' performance. Researchers may or may not offer pedagogical suggestions and even if they do, they may be biased because they tend to disregard factors affecting learning outside of their own research area.

Is There Any Need to Bridge The Gap?

Yes, there is every need to bridge the gap between Research and teaching. Given that expectation for research has risen at the same time that higher education is facing demands for increased public accountability, the advantages of strengthening the correlation between research and teaching seems clear and several studies encourage a stronger connection.

Students obviously would benefit from effective linkage between research and teaching. Lecturers would benefit from the efficiency and satisfaction of integrating their primary professional responsibilities. The institution would also benefit when their stakeholders perceive that they are not neglecting their educational mission since a more positive public image may translate into greater financial support from legislative, industrial and philanthropic groups and more student applicants resulting in a stronger and more selective student body. There are many reasons for bridging the research – teaching nexus at both the individual faculty and institutional levels.

Strategies for Bridging the Research – Teaching Gap

There is still much to be done if institutions in Nigeria hope to encourage and support strong linkages between research and teaching. The gap between research and teaching can be bridged in a number of ways like:-

1. **Bringing Research into the Classroom:**

Researchers in Nigeria should keep the complexity of the classroom setting in mind in whatever they are doing. Teachers with active research

programmes should bring their research into the classroom and use it to inform their teaching. Pocklington and Tupper (2002) found that this assumption is frequently unjustified and claim that "current models of integration are inadequate philosophically, they are naïve politically; and they ignore reforms essential to integrating research and teaching".

An alternative way to integrate research into classroom and one with much empirical support in terms of improving students learning is to teach in a manner that replicates the research process e.g. by using an inductive learning approach such as inquiry – based or problem based.

Researchers should consider:

- (a) Whether it is desirable to make pedagogical suggestions based on the given research findings.
- (b) If so, what type of contribution can the research results make and
- (c) For what teaching context are the suggestions appropriate?

Most times, the findings from applied research are not necessarily linked to practice and when they are, they often have an indirect relationship to pedagogy. In the case of practical research the result can be readily applied to practice, provided that the characteristics of learning context and learners are similar to the one in which the research is conducted.

As teachers begin to apply the research of others to their own classroom contexts, they inevitably will come up with questions like: Does the research address the concerns I have about my classroom? If not how would I find the answers to my questions? As a teacher asks such questions, he/she will begin to make a reflection that leads to the generation of his or her own research. Teachers who ask questions and then systematically study their own teaching generate new research about teaching that can be shared with others.

Teachers can also take the methods they used in their scholarly activities and translate them into inductive teaching environment by borrowing elements of their own research or choosing challenges more appropriate to the subjects and levels of the courses they are teaching. Their research knowledge and experience from supervising

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research students could all be brought into their teaching and thereby enrich student instruction in the classroom environment.

This would help students to develop critical thinking and problem – solving skills that will serve them well in any career path they undertake.

Again, if students are taught inductively as fresh students, it could induce many of them to seek research experiences later in the curriculum. Repeated exposure to inductive teaching throughout the curriculum would quip students to function effectively as researchers by the time they graduate.

Authors like Elton (2001) and Brew (2003) conclude that a positive research – teaching link depends primarily on the nature of the students’ learning experiences and also propose that student-centered teaching (as exemplified by inductive approaches) provides the type of experience that enhance the correction.

2) **Collaborative Research:**

The research community must be in constant dialogue with teachers about the challenges faced by them and about the role research can play in responding to those challenges. It is especially important that teachers be invited to participate in determining the issues on which research should focus.

Theoretical rigour and educational realities should be blended to get a holistic perspective and close the gaps between “knowing” and “doing” (Burgoyne and Reynolds, 1997; Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000).

Practitioner’s knowledge compliments that of researchers. Such a collaborative form of inquiry, helps both teachers and researchers leverage their unique perspectives to have a holistic understanding about the teaching phenomenon, making for what is called intellectual arbitrage. Practice needs theory to shape it and theory on the other hand is tested and developed through practice. Teachers should provide researchers with problems from their areas of teaching and researchers with their expertise should provide teachers with useful and relevant solutions. Researchers should view practitioners as important stakeholders and take up educationally relevant problem centric research. Relevant studies provide insights that help teachers understand themselves and their profession better.

Teachers while evaluating academic research, look for findings that are related to issues or problems pertinent to their teaching areas. Researchers need to understand what teachers really expect from the result of their research. Thomas and Tymon (1982) have identified five areas of expectation:-

First, practitioners would be interested in knowing if the research is dealing with real educational problems and issues. Discipline relevance, checks for the accuracy of research findings in capturing phenomena encountered by practitioners in their professional settings. This relevance can be checked at the problem formulation stage. Researchers should ensure descriptive relevance by identifying research problems which are on interest to the practitioners. The research problem should be specific and deal with a “real world” problem.

Secondly, teachers would be interested in knowing whether the research findings potentially help them have a better hold on certain factors which are critical to the achievement of their set goals. Goal relevance, checks for the correspondence of outcome (or dependent) variables in a theory to the factors the practitioner wishes to influence.

Thirdly, educational practitioners often maneuvered many educational factors to achieve a desired result. Hence, they would be more interested in educational factors that they can influence, which in the parlance of academic research, are independent variables. They would be less interested in factors which cannot be maneuvered. This relevance or operational validity checks for whether the practitioners can and/or would like to maneuver the factors identified by the researchers as causal (independent) variables.

The researcher can check for both goal relevance and operational validity during the second phase of hypothesis development and operationalization of research design. The research is said to have a high degree of operational validity and goal congruence if the variables identified by the researcher are relevant to educational issues and can be manipulated by the teacher. High degree of goal congruence is related to the appropriateness of dependent variables. High degree of operational validity is ensured by selecting appropriate independent variables that can be maneuvered by the practitioners.

Fourthly, teachers expect researchers to provide new insight in form of knowledge and information, which goes beyond intuition. This relevance non-

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obviousness checks for the extent to which a theory meets or exceeds the intuition of a practitioner.

In order for research to be useful to teachers, the insights from the research should be available for use in time. This relevance is labeled as timeliness. The researcher needs to ensure both non-obviousness and timeliness of the insights on offer. This can be checked in the final stage of research, where a researcher draws inferences and conclusions based on the interpretation of data. The researcher should attempt to provide some recommendations, based on these research insights that are applicable to teaching practice.

Researchers should find ways to share some early findings with teachers at relevant forums, before the findings become relevant for the teachers. The biggest challenge faced by the academic community is to balance the requirements of practice (relevance) and building rigor into the enquiry process through specialization (Klein 1990). The relevance of academic research can be enhanced by (a) doing research in relevant areas and/or (b) working collaboratively with teachers to understand research findings.

Researchers should offer clean complete explanations of why they are taking up particular research questions and why they believe the questions should be studied in a particular way. They should also explain how a given study contributes to our understanding of teaching and learning. When provided with explicit information about the assumptions and beliefs guiding the work, teachers can draw up on studies informed by a range of theoretical orientations and use multiple ways of seeing to enrich their understanding, their students and their practice.

Researchers should undertake problem solving research which is relevant to teaching practice. They need to be specific and substantive while formulating research problems. The research problems should not be generic and conjectural with a number of a-prior assumptions.

Daft (1983) has urged researchers to give up the tendency of armchair theorizing with little input from contact with an actual organization. Others such as Strasser and Bateman (1984) have suggested that the research process should begin with a real problem that concerns the practitioner and the focus enquiry should be directed towards helping practitioners address their problems with new insights or knowledge. Such a

collaborative approach represents a distinct departure from the conventional soloist approach of identifying research problems on the basis of review of literature.

Collaboration between researchers and teachers will facilitate academic research with relevance. Researchers can significantly increase the likelihood of advancing when they interact, collaborate and forge partnership with teachers.

3) **Formally Recognizing and Rewarding Teachers who Successfully Integrate their Teaching and Research:**

Most teachers adhere to the natural human tendency to pursue activities that are recognized and rewarded. As Colbeck suggests, one way to promote integration of teaching and research is to ask teachers to explicitly list integrative activities in their annual activity reports as opposed to forcing them to sort all activities into one or the other domain. Flexible criteria for assessing integrative activities should be adopted.

4) **Establish Development Programmes In Both Teaching And Research In Institutions Including Ways To Integrate The Two Domains:**

Most teachers begin their academic careers with little or no training in either teaching or managing a research programme, let alone in how to integrate the two. Giving newly recruited teachers some early guidance through workshops and/or mentorships could significantly strengthen the research – teaching nexus and it would also go a long way toward enhancing both the institution's research productivity and the effectiveness of its teaching programmes.

5) **Create Research Translation Roles:** On the assumption that change on the part of either researchers or practitioners is likely to be difficult (because their existing patterns of knowledge, skills and interests are not arbitrary but are well adopted to their respective roles, and strongly supported by existing systems of rewards and constraints) this approach calls for the creation of an entirely new role, the “research translator”. Such people would be able to speak the ‘language’ of both practitioners and researchers, and would be able to translate research findings into a form that is comprehensible, plausible and appears potentially fruitful to practitioners as well as to convey the interests and concerns of practitioners to researchers. The research translation role is one that seems to have the potential to offer significant benefits.

Conclusions

It is clear that research programmes that fail to carefully and deliberately consider contextual factors ignore the realities of the education enterprise and produce research findings that have a low probability of being adopted by practitioners.

There is need to bring the focus back to generating and sustaining valid and relevant knowledge, whether it is abstract, empirical or practical, rather than submit to the rat race of “publish or perish”, and the clamour for rankings of Nigerian institutions.

Finally, this paper recommends that institutions in Nigeria should identify broad thematic areas of research and articulate their research philosophy, focus and long term research agenda. This would help in selecting teachers and doctoral scholars with the right skills, aptitude and interest. It is the quality of research that leads both to a proactive theory and can be translated into practice that differentiates scholars from consulting firms.

In order to create an ecosystem that facilitates relevant academic research, institutions in Nigeria should:

- (a) Review and revamp doctoral research programmes.
- (b) Attract and groom teachers for conducting relevant research
- (c) Collaborate and sponsor academic journals that put balanced emphasis on both methodological rigour and practical relevance (usefulness) of the contribution.

The researchers too in their individual capacities should

- (a) Understand the nature of disconnect with classroom realities
- (b) Be more confident and assertive
- (c) Collaborate with teachers for research and
- (d) Expand their methodological repertoire by including methodologies which take cognizance of the role of practical issues and explicitly address the interdependence of theory and practice.

Besides, they should

- (e) Focus on problem solving research by treating teachers as their primary stakeholders and be specific and substantive while articulating research problems and communicating findings.
- (f) Convert knowledge into practice and communicate the same in jargon-free language and
- (g) Share ideas, knowledge and research insights at appropriate forums in a timely manner.

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The state of the research – teaching nexus affects the quality of education provided by institutions across the research spectrum. The driving forces behind the heavy emphasis on research in the academic priority system, the quest for research money and high institutional ranking that those money make possible are unlikely to change significantly in the near future. Therefore, rather than lamenting the rising expectations for research, it is more productive to seek ways to improve education that works within the prevailing trend. The strategies we have recommended in this paper are intended to do exactly that. Thank YOU.

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