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**Title: TOWARDS AN OPTIMAL CLIMATE AND DYNAMIC CULTURE IN
FUNCTIONAL EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

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Introduction

To state that Research is a necessity to the growth and development of an organisation in whatever name or form the organisation is recognized, is considered axiomatic. In that sense, an organisation that is worth its salt and that would not readily go down the drains of history would give prominence to research and would make the latter a watchword in all intents and purposes, in theory and in practice. Educational organisations are no exceptions to this proposition neither is a country (as an organisation), in whatever stage of development it is, an exception.

Research, in general, is, therefore, an inevitable activity that must be put in place in a country in all phases of her existence, sociological, safety and security, name it, for the nation to grow and develop. Of particular note and interest is educational research which is not only foundational to all other areas of development but also germane to the theme of this conference. Also, germane to the theme of the conference is sustainable national development and an attempt is to be made (at the conference) to juxtapose the two phenomena-educational research and sustainable national development. However, for a start, this paper proposes that educational research must be examined from the point of view of functionality and applicability to make it meaningful and achieve the purpose of national development. The main question that the paper then addresses is the presence and availability of the required climate and culture for functional educational research so that sustainable national development can be achieved. Adjunct to this, are the following questions:

Is Nigeria's educational research functional? Are the results and findings of the research made use of and applied? What factors are needed for these purposes? Are the factors readily available? Under what conditions would educational research take place and be made to bring about sustainable national development?

Perspectives of Educational Research

Similar to a phenomenon of its like, the term research has been variously defined, described explained, characterized and categorized, ditto for educational research. For the purpose of brevity and being economical with words, a few of these scholarly expressions on research and educational research will here be presented and summarized. Research is considered to be the more formal, systematic and intensive process of carrying out a scientific method of analysis in problem solving. Such a method may be a formal application of problem identification, hypothesis formulation, observation, analysis and conclusion. Research is also a more systematic activity that is directed toward discovery and the development of an organized body of knowledge. Research may therefore be defined as the systematic and objective analysis and recording of observations that may

lead to the development of generalizations, principles or theories resulting in prediction and possibly ultimate control of events.

With respect to Educational Research, it is the systematic collection and analysis of data related to the field of education such as student learning, teaching methods, teacher training and classroom dynamics (American Educational Research Association, 2019). Again, according to the Association, Educational research is “the scientific field of study that examines education and learning processes and human attributes, interactions, organisations and institutions that shape educational outcomes”. Apparently, the breadth and with of Educational Research is unlimited embracing the full spectrum of rigorous methods appropriate to the study problem in question and hence to the development of new tools and methods.

The history of Educational Research in Nigeria dates back to the colonial times when there were the Phelps-Stokes, Elliot and Ashby Commissions specifically set up for particular purposes. The research of these commissions could at best be described as episodic. It was not long after independence that the need for purposeful and well-directed educational research was realized consequent upon which the Nigerian Educational Research Council was born in 1964 (Awokoya, 1986) and which metamorphosed into Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). Since then, Educational Research in Nigeria has gradually developed, in leaps and bounds, and has reached a revolutionary and an advanced stage. The results is the emergence of several organisations and the publication of several journals. Other products of the keen interest in educational research are occasional papers, reports and monographs from workshops, seminars and conferences. Still, there are no limits to the research that rage on in the education sector particularly that “the explosion in educational growth in Nigeria has made it absolutely necessary to organise a more formal basis for educational research in the country (Awokayo, 1986).

Educational research may be useful in theory building, it is more useful in solving practical problems connected with the educational system. Thus, while contributing to the body of knowledge in education, educational research also helps to find solutions to real-world problems and, therefore, helps in the development of the world and its constitute

nations. The essence of educational research then is to make it functional, to turn acquired skill and knowledge into citizenship service, to raise the value of life. In the absence of this, educational research becomes meaningless. In other words, educational research has little or no meaning unless it promotes and stimulates the growth and development of the society. Good educational research must be functional.

Making Educational Research Functional

One of the developmental problems in Nigeria is ensuring a functional educational system. The Nigerian educational system has undergone several metamorphoses since the colonial era through pre-and post-independence periods making serious and conscious efforts to ensure progress and development for relevance and currency. This struggle continues *ad infinitum* just as there is no end to development. It then stands logical that Educational Research cannot and must not be static but dynamic to meet up with the changing needs of the society in all ramifications. More importantly, therefore, is that Educational Research must be geared towards being purposeful, solving a problem, illuminating a situation, bringing about practical improvement, contributing to knowledge, formulating policies and hence towards overcoming several developmental challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, ignorance and the like which are inimical to human existence and national development. In essence, Educational Research must not only be undertaken, for its sake but also and majorly for its functionality in order for schools not to “turn out graduates without useful knowledge and skills and who become alienated from their own environment” (Asaju and Adagba, 2014).

The functionality of Educational Research resides, therefore, apparently in its being spontaneous from the influence of the natural and social environment, from daily life events, from societal needs and interests and then, being directed towards desirable activities. The functionality of Educational research also resides in adaptation of the education system to vicissitudes (changes) such that the system can preserve itself and do not collapse inspite of changes. The system can then attain and maintain equilibrium and can always bring itself back to stability when it is shaken and troubled. To be functional, Educational Research must, therefore, follow the laws of functional activity as enunciated by Zeilberger (1999) viz:

- (a) The law of biological need that activates the reactions that may satisfy it. The actual needs change with the development of the child.
- (b) The law of expansion of the spiritual life. The larger the gap between the needs and the means that are needed to satisfy them, the more active becomes the life of the mind that are needed to overcome this gap.
- (c) The law of conscious understanding – conscious act.
- (d) The law of anticipation – being aware, ahead of time thereby maintaining its equilibrium and keeping it from collapsing.
- (e) The law of interest. All behaviour is conditioned on interest. Every activity is done in order to reach a goal, that is, important to the person at that moment. The interest is, therefore, the “fundamental principle of spiritual activity”. When the interest is satisfied, it makes room for another interest.
- (f) The law of the present interest. When several needs and interests arise at the same time, ‘the organism acts at any given time, in the direction of the greatest interest’.
- (g) The law of repeats. Every need tends to bring about reactions (or states) that were useful in the past, and to repeat a behaviour that was successful in similar previous circumstances.
- (h) The law of grouping – the need to activate searching reactions, grouping and experimenting.
- (i) The law of functional autonomy- with functional integrity, having reactions connections adapted to needs, enabling functioning according to nature as a condition to the development and emerging of additional, and more refined functions.

In extending the principles of functionality as stated by Zeilberger (1999), one can also posit that, Educational Research, functionally, has to:

- (i) be from the standpoint of one’s world view- in terms of concepts drawn from experience and one’s criteria;
- (ii) be based on natural need not by force but in a free atmosphere and in suitable conditions (government should create a lively and happy environment for researchers to act enthusiastically);
- (iii) be at the centre of the curriculum not exterior to the child;
- (iv) be adapted to the natural growth of the system;
- (v) be in conditions that naturally induce an action by satisfying a need;
- (vi) develop the intellectual and moral abilities of the system without force-feeding with many facts that are easily forgotten and that have no connection with the system;
- (vii) be active where the classroom would be a kind of laboratory;
- (viii) be futuristic and preparatory for social activity;

(ix) should stimulate moral and spiritual needs through cooperation, self-study, personal experience, enthusiasm (rather than scholarship and psychologically drained researcher);

(x) have a common core curriculum and be fit-to-size of the system in every stage of development.

The Needed Climate and Culture

To actualize the full potential benefits of educational research albeit for sustainable national development, it is critical to have an optimal climate and a dynamic culture that are suitable and appropriate for research and researchers. The climate for educational research is founded in the set of shared values and norms held by researchers that guide their interactions with peers, management and clients (Scheider, 1975). The climate is also founded on organizational or authority structure, individual autonomy and responsibility, leadership, rewards, warmth, support and cooperation as well as tolerance and conflicts, among other factors.

Furthermore, research climate represents researchers' perceptions of organisational policies, practices and procedures, and subsequent patterns of interactions and behaviours that support research. Thus, research climate is founded on how researchers experience the culture of research in the community. After all, "the culture of an organisation breeds an organisational climate which represents how members of an organisation experience that organisation's culture" (Study.com, 2019). However, though both climate and culture deal with the social context in research and both are assumed to affect the behaviour of people, research climate usually refers to the current situation while research culture usually refers to the historical antecedents and tradition of research (Hofstede, 1997). This informs why the climate is easier to experience and measure than culture and also easier to change. Meanwhile, "it is becoming more and more evident that the climate researchers work in determines their ideas of what is normal, what is good science, what are misbehaviours, or whether they feel supported by their organisations (ARCA, 2019).

Generally, research culture can be defined as the collection of beliefs, values, behaviours, attitudes and customs that characterized a community of researchers. Be that as it may, it is difficult to recognize a uniformly satisfying definition of a culture of research. To Nadeen and Parker, as cited in Abdul Rahman and Abdul Rahman (2013), "research

culture is a set of values, beliefs, assumptions and behaviours related to the implementation of research that are owned by the organisation collectively”. Similarly expressed by Bazeleya, and Morgan, in Abdul Rahman and Abdul Rahman (2013), research culture is a series of values, beliefs, principles, assumptions that are framed in rules as cultural norms related to conduct of research within an organisation. Thus, the research culture members of an organisation are in a system of shared meaning collectively. Meanwhile, research culture is seen as something that is relatively stable and may persist over time.

Significantly, a healthy research culture is a key component of sustaining and enhancing good practices in research (UK Research Integrity Office, 2019). In the words of Bland and Ruffin, as cited in Abdul Rahman and Abdul Rahman (2013), the factor that influences a research productivity environment is a research culture which can be understood and viewed as an approach that has four distinct phases in the process of any environmental conditions namely (i) CREATING a research culture (ii) GROWING a research culture (iii) DEVELOPING a cultural research (iv) NURTURING a research culture. To have an excellent research, therefore, there is the need for a positive research culture that supports all individuals involved albeit, supported and influenced by national policies and programmes, local policies, and the attitudes and behaviour of staff at all levels.

In summary, and characteristically, a much needed, required and dynamic culture of research is a system that places great value on conduct and communicating research, that provides supportive context in which research is uniformly expected, discussed, produced and valued with open and collaborative personal relationships among faculty members. The dynamic culture of research is one of both institutional and unit-based leaders that set clear research goals and communicate them effectively; one that allocates significant resources for faculty training and support based on members’ current motivations and abilities. Yet, that dynamic research culture, once established, requires regular maintenance the result of which is research productivity and integrity founded on high ethical standards.

Against the backdrop of the discourse on research climate and culture, one can conveniently inquire about and hence call for the creation and improvement of an optimal climate and a dynamic culture for educational research in Nigeria. This level should not only be at the national level but also at the regional, gender, generational, social class and corporate levels that would engender sustainable national development.

Understanding National Development

An understanding of the term National Development shows that it is very broad, comprehensive, holistic, totalistic and multidisciplinary as well as dynamic, revolutionary, qualitative and quantitative. From these observed and highlighted characteristics, one could understand that national development is the overall, total, all-round and balanced change in growth and development and hence advancement of a country or nation leading to societal transformation and transfiguration in all facets, dimensions and ramifications including social, economic, cultural, political, educational, scientific, technological and even religious, just to mention some germane areas.

Meanwhile, development *per se* is about and centres on change plus growth that is steady and systematic in all spheres of a society in such a way that it “increases production, empowers the people and their communities, protects the environment, strengthens institutions, grows quality of life and promotes good governance” (Ekundayo, 2015). Indeed, development is “a concept used to measure human comfort and satisfaction” (Uriah and Wosu, 2012). Hence, “as distinct from growth, development is about people and how their lives and institutions can get better” (Igbafé, and Ihonvbere, in Ekundayo, 2015). Thus, while Uriah and Wosu (2012) state that “development is thought to be of the people, by the people and for the people”, Nyerere, in Onyenemezu and Okanezi (2013), “posits that development is of man, by man and for man”. Uriah and Wosu (2012) also state that “development, as we understand it today often revolves around humans”. Development is also a kind of change that is defined in the direction of capacity building towards self-sustenance, growth and self-fulfillment as it affects individuals or institutions in a society. It would then appear that national development is about the quality of life of the citizens and people of a country or nation and it encapsulates such measures and parameters as:

1. development through a planned national economy;
2. increase in agricultural production through application of modern technical know-how;
3. harnessing industrial production;
4. development of human resource;
5. application of science and technology in production sector;
6. provision of various facilities to meet the needs and aspirations of disadvantaged, deprived and poorest of the poor segment of the population (Bawa, 2019).

In the same vein, while noting that national development is the ability of a country to improve the social welfare of the people, Sarma (2018) quoted that, in 1971, UNO gave the factors for national development as:

- i. equal living standard for all;
- ii. equal share of all in profit;
- iii. equal distribution of income and capital;
- iv. expansion of facilities regarding education health, shelter and social welfare;
- v. preservation of environment.

However, Sarma (2018) separately identifies the factors affecting national development as economic, political, social, increasing population, socio-cultural, modernization and psychological.

Sarma (2018) then goes further to note and highlight that national development:

1. removes poverty;
2. improves national income and per capita income;
3. develops quality in education;
4. revolutionarizes change in the field of agriculture;
5. develops medical facilities;
6. develops transport and communication;
7. controls pollution and environmental hazard;
8. makes use of science and technology;
9. involves preservation and development of nature and environment;
10. develops economic conditions of the people living in the particular country;
11. involves development of the socio-economic conditions of the people;
12. implies introduction of welfare schemes of people for the betterment of their life and standard of living;
13. involves development of an impartial and well organised political system;
14. encompasses the preservation, enrichment and development of culture;
15. promotes concept of sustainable development.

It would then seem that national development can be best achieved through development planning and hence through a “country’s policies, plans, programmes and projects and other collection of strategies mapped out by the government” (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, in Ekundayo, 2015) for faithful implementation with commitment and good governance on the part of the leaders and with absence of corruption. Then and, only then can the country generate not only a meaningful development but also a sustainable one. One of such strategies and or programmes for achieving national development is educational research for, all other sectors of a country rest squarely on the shoulders of education, the mother of all other professions and occupations. Education is the pivot of all and, therefore, educational research is the route to all other research.

Sustaining National Development Through Functional Educational Research

The significance of national development cannot be controverted just like sustaining national development is a must. Separately, “sustainable national development is a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual humans and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental system” (Munasinghe, in Boyi, 2013). Thus, “sustainable development is conceptualized as human progress that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their town goals” (Ugwu and Ijah, in Onyenemezu and Okanezi, 2013). The import of sustainable development then seems to lie in the emphasis on continuity of development for a long time albeit, for today and tomorrow. However, much as sustainable national development as a phenomenon has contemporarily “become a password that resonates all disciplines in today’s knowledge industry” (Onyenemezu and Okanezi, 2013), its achievement goes beyond mere rhetorics. Yet, sustainable national development “is associated with ‘omnipotent capabilities’ of proffering solutions to all problems of man and society” (Onyenemezu and Okanezi, 2013) despite the daunting challenges. It is therefore incumbent that sustainable national development be addressed squarely and systematically with all the attention it deserves employing all possible means and strategies. Thus, Abraham, in Onyenemezu and Okanezi (2013), “submits that sustainable development mantra enjoins current

generations to take a systematic approach to growth and development and to manage natural, produced and social capital for the welfare of their own and future generations in a system that connects space; and a system that connects time”. Notable amongst the means, strategies and systems for sustainable national development is education and, hence educational research.

The unique position that education occupies as an intervention instrument in sustainable national development is founded in its being fundamental and effective to bringing about comprehensive changes, albeit positively, development, improvement or refinement in all ramifications of man’s existence now and in the future. In the words of Uriah and Wosu (2012), “the major aim of education is human capital development which, when systematically applied, translates into functional resources in the national development equations of a country”. Indeed, sustainable development is akin to and “fundamentally seen as an education concept” (Onyenemezu and Okanezi, 2013). And, Umoh, in Boyi (2013), “refers to education and sustainable development as two sides of the same coin” being “interwoven, intertwined, and interconnected” (Boyi, 2013). Thus, in its National Policy on Education, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) states that “education shall continue to be highly prioritized in national development plans because education is the most important instrument of change; any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society must be preceded by an education revolution”. This then makes an unending visit to the education industry inevitable; a continuous look, examination and review of education a necessity; beaming a search and research on all that constitute an education system a task that must be done; in order to build and sustain the development of a nation. In essence, education and educational research present a formidable forum and the fulcrum around which every other activity revolves (Tahir, in Boyi, 2013) for sustainable national development. Indeed, there is a great nexus between educational research and sustainable national development.

At this juncture, it is imperative and important to note that attempts and efforts to make educational research contribute meaningfully to sustainable national development should gradually and systematically move away from a politicized to a more analytical approach that appreciates the complexities inherent in educational research. Therefore, the

educational research for sustainable national development must not only be organized, coordinated and systematic but must also not be devoid of objectivity, productivity and functionality. The advocated educational research must, in addition, also be veritable and address a learner's needs and interests as a mechanism for activating him and towards desirable activities. This would be to develop his mind and wholeness with relation to practical life in the present and in the future.

Sustainable national development then implies that Nigerian education and hence its system must be relevant to societal needs and be able to solve the myriads of daunting problems that the country is presently challenged with such that the future is not compromised and does not appear bleak. Thus, educational research must identify and address relevant focal points that chart the course of sustainable national development. Functional Research in education must then be looked into and strengthened to equip recipients of education with the knowledge and skills required for that performance of productive task and that lay emphasis on practice more than theory. Seeing educational research in this perspective calls for an effective first-class research needed to raise learners' achievement at all educational levels and forms and in all the three spheres of cognitive, affective and psychomotor knowledge, skills and values. Hence, such a functional educational research would focus on learners' achievement of their potentials and aspirations for them to acquire a source of living towards a better and humane-life and towards contributing their own quota to the sustainable growth and development of the nation. The result of such a research would be the production of adequate qualitative manpower "...that will turn around the available resources into wealth for the nation... to be redistributed to favour the poor population" (Asaju and Adagba, 2014). The result of such a research would also be a nation that has the ability to "satisfactorily provide the food and fibre that are needed by its people and industry" (Kingdom and Mackae, 2013).

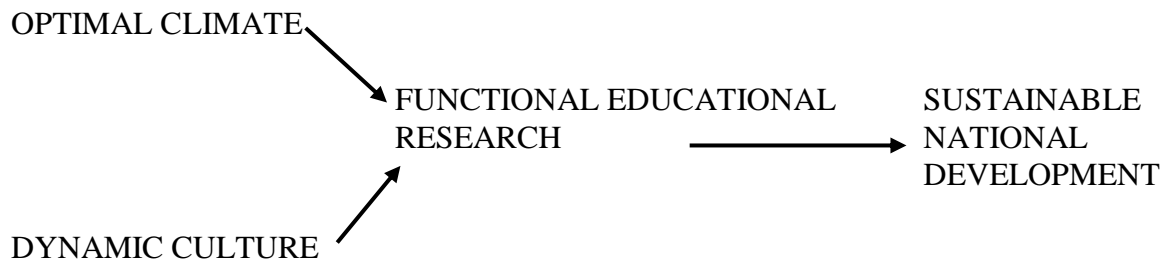
Suggestively, some key issues for functional educational research that must be so addressed to steer the Nigerian nation towards sustainable national development include:

1. The Teaching/Learning Environment; Internal/External; Physical/Emotional
2. Equality of Educational Opportunities including gender equity
3. Empowerment of parents to play their own expected roles

4. National and Educational Planning
5. Entrepreneurship and Non-Formal Education
6. Public-Private-Partnership in Education
7. Total Quality Management in Education
8. Educational Leadership
9. Funding and Financing of Education
10. Politics of Education cum Political Stability
11. Enlightenment, Education and Awareness of the populace
12. Teacher Demand and Supply
13. Educational Research, Culture and Climate
14. Information and Communication technology in Schools
15. Teaching Methodology

Conclusion and Recommendations

The points that have been raised and canvassed in this presentation indicate that Educational Research is a must and necessity for sustainable national development. The points also indicate that an optimal climate and a dynamic culture are germane to research for the latter to achieve its objectives. Yet, this paper posits that educational research must not just be for its sake but for functionality in order to attain sustainable national development. It is thus the conclusion of this paper that with quality functional educational research under an optimal research climate and cultivated under a dynamic research culture, it is possible to ensure sustainable national development for a better life for Nigerians of all walks of life. This presents the conceptual framework of the paper as hereby diagrammatically represented:



Source: Author, 2019

Hence, the following recommendations are put forth:

1. All agencies and relevant institutions of research in education must separately enable an optimal climate for the research to take place. This demands adequate research funding and facilities.
2. All agencies and relevant institutions of research in education must deliberately create a dynamic research culture to be all-inclusive. The awareness needs to be consciously created among researchers.
3. The agencies and the institutions and hence the researchers must focus on functional and relevant educational research with the needs and problems of the society in mind.
4. A meeting point should be created for the agencies and institutions to regularly congregate for exchange of ideas and information to improve educational research towards sustainable national development.
5. Educational research results at individual and organisational levels, either commissioned or non-commissioned, should be subjects of practicality after necessary considerations by an organised research body such as the NERDC. In this way and manner, educational research and their findings can be made useful and functional.

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