

CREATION AND SUSTENANCE OF INNOVATION AS EDUCATIONAL REFORM STRATEGY IN NIGERIA

A.G. Ossai (Ph.D)

*School of Education
College of Education,
Agbor.*

And

E. N. Nwalado

*School of Education,
Federal College of Education (Technical),
Asaba.*

Abstract

Reform and innovation are tools to enhance sustainable development in education and have been receiving the attention of educators and researchers across the world. In organizational context, reform/innovation is viewed as intentionally bringing into existence and practice something more, so as to enhance performance and growth. This paper examined the need for educational system to formulate a school culture that is dynamic and forward looking, in order to create an environment of reform and innovation. It also focuses on the challenges militating against the effective implementation of reforms and innovation in the school system in Nigeria. It was concluded that school culture of reform (innovation is to enhance and sustain school quality productivity and efficiency. Reform/innovation requires development not only for individual creativity but creating a sustainable innovative environment. Recommendations are then made towards sustainable educational reform and innovation in Nigeria. These include creating and sustaining the culture of reform/innovation, developing a good research attitude, creating experience and leaders taking the lead in reform/innovation.

Key Words: Innovation, reform, education, creativity

Educational reform and innovation are synonymous with the injection of new ideas, methods and techniques or strategies into educational system so as to improve both internal and external efficiency and arrangements of the system and more of development social, cultural, political, economic and technological (Adepoju and Olaniyi, 1999). Education reform and innovation also imply bringing about a change in the status quo. It is described as a new dispensation to meet the challenges posed by new technological development and to improve the quality of the educational system. It is extremely difficult nowadays to discuss education at any level in isolation with change, reform and innovation, most especially in this period of globalization and information and communication technology development, when teaching and learning activities are more of learners-centred rather than teacherscentred. To ensure that the educational system is structured and made much more relevant to the needs and aspirations of the society, new and relevant ideas and approaches must be injected into the system.

As highlighted by Miles (1964), the adoption of new ideas or reforms in education is hinged upon the following.

1. Consideration of cost
2. Consideration of technological factors
3. Availability of associated support materials
4. Simplicity of implementation
5. Innovation system congruence.

Education reform is a re-thinking of the role of education in nation building. It is essentially a re-examination of the goals and objective of education and efforts towards their attainment, as the work of any educational system as an investment lies in its capability to continuously serve its stakeholders better and remain relevant to national development.

Equally, prioritization of reform and innovation is achievable, if culture of innovation is sustained in the school system. An innovation is transformation of practice in an organization. It is not the same as the invention of a new idea or object. A transformation of practice in organization won't happen unless the new practice generates more values to the member than the old. Many innovations and reforms are enabled and preceded by inventions but many innovations occurred without a significant invention (Denning, 2004). In a culture of innovation, people will have a

habit of constantly looking for ways to improve things (Denning, 2004). The use of technology as the only solution to innovation and reform would not meet challenges of education in this millennium. Giving each child a computer would typically not produce superior learning without additional changes in the nature of the schools teaching, learning and assessment practice (Dynarski, Agodimi, Heawiged, Novak, Larey and Campuzano 2007). Effective change would register more holistic approach to completely transform the learning experience of the learner in most countries,

Creation and Sustenance of Innovation as Educational Reform Strategy in Nigeria

Ossai (Ph.D) and E. N. Nwalado

school curricula and instruction are mostly didactic based on subject-based knowledge transmission and large amount of rote learning. This ignores many skills that are increasingly necessary for life, and work often fails to engage students. Of cause, schools implement and work according to national standards and other learning requirements, but they can consider more effective teaching and learning strategies and encourage student-centred learning and assessment processes (National Research Council, 2005). Thus, the article reviews the need for effective planning in educational reform and innovation in Nigeria. The study will emphasis the need for education system to create and sustain the culture of innovation, especially in Nigeria. The study will encourage the school administration to show leadership in innovation and reforms. The school system needs to generate new and worthwhile ideas, knowledge in the face of growing of knowledge all over the world.

Transforming Education through Reform and Innovation

The development and transformation of education has been a great challenge in this millennium. National Policy on Education in Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument for effecting national development (FRN). There is no doubt that education is central to the development of individuals and the society in general. There is tremendous development in technology, which has necessitated constant technological change and innovation. The challenge for education in this millennium is the need for reform and innovation in creating adoptable approach, which enhances young people's lives within the school and their future employment.

Reform/innovation is defined as incremental, radical and revolutionary changes in thinking, products, processes, or organizations. In the organizational context, innovation may be linked to performance and growth through improvement in efficiency, productivity, quality, competitive positioning. Innovation is also viewed as intentionally bringing into existence something new that can be sustained and repeated and which has some value or unity (Selman, 2009) Fagerberg (2004) also distinguished between innovation and invention. To him, invention is the first occurrence of an idea for a new produce, while innovation is the first attempt to carry it out into practice. Innovation / reform is typically understood as the successful introduction of something new and useful.

Reform/innovation and its manifestation and attempts have been visible in all spheres of education system and practice. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education has brought lots of technological reforms and innovation. Innovations in terms of teaching and learning, open distance learning student-centred-learning, blended learning and collaboration learning. Computer aided learning is not only used as an instructional material but also as a tool and learning facilitator. Technologies are keys for transforming the learning environment.

Schools need access to technology for all teachers and students in order to support learning. Innovation attempts to introduce student-centred, problem-based learning and technology-rich learning environment have not succeeded because they collided with the existing, and sometimes outdated assessment practices or because professional development for teachers and leaders were underemphasized. Educators are faced with the task of creating an environment that can create and harness the wisdom and intellect of their teachers and students. The aim is to create schools that are built in collaborations which can be assembled to harness their combined talents into innovations.

Education is an ever-changing bureaucracy and schools should not only deal with change, they must come to expect or even welcome change. It must be embedded into the culture of the school. Innovation today is a continuous process of small and constant change and it is built into the culture of successful organizations.

Equally, innovative lab was perceived as a strategy to enhance innovation in organizations. It is a school site in which staff members or departments volunteer to use the collaborative leverage of the group to innovate ideas and solutions to improve institutions management and the operation of the school. All stakeholders in the school: teachers counselors, psychologists, administrators, students, and parents collaborating to meet the needs of the school. The innovative lab is faster at solving problems because of the combined cross functions represented in the term. All stakeholders are included in the development of the ideas.

Need for Educational Reform/Innovation in Nigeria

Obanya (2004) regarded educational reform/innovation as a rethinking of the role of education in nation building. This is essentially a re-examination of the national goals and provision of answers to the following questions.

1. What type of society is envisaged and what would be the building blocks for such a society?
2. What forms of education will be needed to serve the specific development needs of the envisage society.

-A. G.

3. What necessary input (finance, infrastructure, physical resources, human resources, curriculum etc) should be envisaged for seeing the envisaged reforms through.
4. What specific educative act or processes should be actively and systematically promoted to ensure that the goals of the educational reforms are achieved.
5. To what extent are the input and the processes helping to achieve the intended outcome?

Creation and Sustenance of Innovation as Educational Reform Strategy in Nigeria

Ossai (Ph.D) and E. N. Nwalado

The Nigerian educational system has in recent times, experienced series of scientific, technological, economic, political and social upheavals such as the introduction of computer education, literacy education, family life education, the use of ICT in education and modern economic theories, ideas, techniques and methods into the school curriculum.

The rationale behind the innovation of Nigerian educational system in reform/innovative programmes is an indication of a major form in shaping the objectives and methods of the programme. The most common reasons or needs for introducing reform and innovation programme into the Nigerian educational structure, curriculum and methods, according to Adepaju (1998) anticipated by the following.

1. **Need to Improve on the Standard:** This is perhaps one of the most frequently discussed issues in the Nigerian educational system today. The standard of education has been generally criticized by many people, both experts and nonexperts. Since educational change is found useful where the standard of the system is declining or where the existing state is generating public outcry, reform/innovation is found to be relevant.
2. **Future Expectations:** Change may be desired if there is an indication about the future trend or expectation of the system. In Nigeria, education is said to be performing different roles which may be expressed in terms of nation building and national development. Therefore, in order to cope with such future demands, educational reformation/innovation may be desirable.
3. **Exogenous Factors:** The presence of some exogenous factors that may influence the system, and which may also be the sources of educational change may justify educational change. For instance, the public may advocate for a course that they believe will benefit their children and the society at large. If

they therefore, demand a change, such change will be incorporated into the system.

4. **Achievement – Inclined:** This would also allow a positive change to take place where there is a need for it. In other words, an educational administrator would always like new programmes that will improve teaching – learning situation to be introduced in the school.
5. **Creativity:** An educational change may be precipitated by the desire of the members of staff to be more creative by introducing new ideas which may lead to the realization of the school objectives and their own individual goal.

Creation and Sustenance of Culture of Reform/Innovation

Innovation/reform process requires a school culture that is dynamic, forward looking and empowered. According to San Francisco and Jossey-Bassey (2008), one of the elements of successful change is understanding that learning is at work. Culture is the playing field for all innovation projects and activities while innovation is for the sake of creating values or lofty visions, the organization must be fertile for the seeds of ideas and solution to grow. Innovation culture could be described as the way members of organization behave and perform their jobs in an effort to invent or create their experiences. It refers to the usual attitude, belief, values and perception of people towards facts, knowledge, ideas for improvement and creating development of existing situation.

In organizational context, innovation/reform is viewed as intentionally bringing into existence and practice something new, so as to enhance performance and growth through improvement in efficiency and effectiveness. It involves people implementing ideas that are new. The school system has embraced series of variables in which culture of innovation could be made manifest. The reform/innovative culture embraces teaching and learning strategies, instructional resources technology in teaching and learning. ICT in administration, student administration, teaching and learning, evaluation, resourcefulness, improvisation, instructional technology, counseling strategies, and innovation fundamentals must be used to create and sustain a culture of innovation. The fundamental principle of innovation include: challenges, focus, creativity, communication, collaboration, completion, and contemplation.

Denning (2004) identified two kinds of practice contributing to a culture of innovation. One is organizational process. This involves management values, rewards, prohibitions, encouragement of new ideas, encouragement of risk-taking and the like. The other one is personal practices without which it is very hard to get organizational

-A. G.

practices to work. The first part of the innovation process is seeing an opportunity. You need to train your awareness so that they may become innovative (Jenni, 2009). Since humans are creative thinkers and group comprises humans, a culture of innovation needs to motivate the groups and individuals to think creatively. If the most viable of those creative ideas are not implemented, the organization may be considered creative but it would not be an innovative organization. Thus, to achieve a culture of innovation you need both creativity and innovation. The culture of innovation comprises of ingredients for its sustenance. Trust is identified as one of the most crucial ingredients to a culture of innovation. If people trust management, then colleagues and the organization itself, they can be more comfortable about sharing ideas without fear of unpleasant consequences.

Creation and Sustenance of Innovation as Educational Reform Strategy in Nigeria

Ossai (Ph.D) and E. N. Nwalado

Creativity and innovation have to take priority over excessive long meetings, reading irrelevant mails and other tasks that take priority in non-innovative organizations. Employees should constantly be experimenting with new ideas and reporting on results whether negative or positive. Employees must have the freedom to make mistake, the opportunity to learn from them and the means to share what they have learned without fear of consequences. In culture of innovation, creative ideas are always recognized and rewarded and creative thinkers are challenged to improve their ideas so that they are more likely to become profitable innovators (Jenni, 2009).

Challenges of Innovation/Reform in the School System

1. **Environmental Factor:** Environmental factors play a very significant role in innovation. An environment that is empowered and flexible that welcomes ideas, tolerates risk, celebrates success, fosters energy and encourages fun is crucial. Creating such a climate may also be the biggest challenge facing all organizations wanting to be more innovative.
2. **Innovation and Goal Definition:** Innovation requires effective goal definition. Effective goal definition requires that organizations state explicitly what their goals are in terms understandable to everyone involved in the innovation process. Effective alignment of action to goals should link explicit actions such as ideas and projects to specific goals participation in teams, to the behaviour of individuals in and out of teams, and each individual should have an explicitly allocated responsibility regarding their role in goals and actions and the payment and reward system that link them to goal attainment. Effective monitoring of result requires the monitoring of all goals, action and teams involved in the innovation process.

3. **Inadequate Leadership Guidance and Innovation:** Leaders as pace-setters should take the initiatives in innovation in education. The dynamic nature of education desires the initiative and effort. The leaders exercise influence in the organization's focus and development. Inadequate guidance and orientation have been a great challenge to development of culture of innovation in schools.

4. **Poor Attitude to Research Outcome:** Researches carried out in education were not adequately utilized (Akomolafe, 2000). Non-utilization of research outcome seems to constitute hindrance to developing culture of innovation. Researchers have made a lot of suggestions and recommendations which were rarely implemented.

5. **Motivation for Performance:** Innovation succeeds from strategic structure that engage the individual to the organization. Innovation is anchored on

intrinsically motivated individuals, with a supportive culture, informed by a broad sense of the future. So, individuals in the system must be highly motivated.

6. **Innovation Failures:** Innovation could experience failure. Innovation that fails, is often potentially good idea but has been rejected or shelved due to budgetary constraints, and lack of skills. Some innovation failures could be due to both external and internal issues. The external causes are outside its influence of control while internal causes are within the control of the organization. Salone (2009), identified common causes of failure as poor leadership, poor organization, poor communication, poor empowerment and poor knowledge management. Likewise causes of failure within the innovation process in and across organizations can be distilled into five types – poor goal definition, poor alignment of actions to goals, poor participation in teams, poor monitoring of results and poor communication.
7. **Funding:** Funding of education has become a perceptual problem in the education system. The financial problem has always been a recurring decimal in all facets of the education system. The problem of funding has affected infrastructural facilities and innovative attempts in education. Education requires adequate funding.

Management of Educational Reform/Innovation

This is perhaps one of the most critical and pervasive task facing the world today. Society is undergoing a structural revolution characterized by multiple and basic changes in economic, social and political institutions. The new forms that emerge will be shaped, in considerable parts by management skills in managing reform and change and its ability to master the process of innovation through which science and technology are transformed into goods and services.

For education to achieve its required purpose, it must be tailored towards the needs and aspirations of the community or environment. This is in agreement with the National Policy on Education (2004), which states inter-alia in section 1, sub-section 9; that efforts shall be made to relate education to overall community needs. By implication, therefore, embarking on educational reform requires that such reform must be precipitated by the need to yield to the demand of the community or environment where such reform is taking place. This is to say in essence that the culture of the community will determine whatever form the reform would take. In other words, a community that is inherently conservative would make reform a difficult task to achieve compared to a dynamic community.

Creation and Sustenance of Innovation as Educational Reform Strategy in Nigeria

Ossai (Ph.D) and E. N. Nwalado

Educational reforms should also be well managed to ensure self-reliance. Self-reliance has a very profound meaning. It is not merely that the child should be taught some handicraft or some manual skills by which he may be supported. There must of course, be manual labour which assists everyone to learn how to use his hands and be self-sufficient. It implies that education must be of such a quality that it will train students in intellectual self-reliance and make them independent thinkers. If this is to become the major aim of learning, the whole process of learning would be transformed. If a student should be so taught that he is capable of acquiring knowledge himself. There is an infinite sum of knowledge in the world and each one needs some finite portion of it for the conduct of his affairs. But it will be a mistake to think that this life-knowledge can be acquired in any school. Life-knowledge can only be acquired from life. The task of the school, however, is to awaken in its students the power to learn from life.

Most parents are anxious for boys to complete the school course so that they can get a paid job and live an easy life. This may however, not be the best way of perceiving education. Learning has value in its own right. The purpose of learning is freedom and freedom is another word for what we refer to as self-reliance. Selfreliance means freedom from dependence on others for any external support. A man who has true learning is truly free and independent. The first and least part of this self-sufficiency is that the person must be educated and made skilled in a craft. A second and very important part of this, is the ability to acquire new knowledge for oneself. The third essential element is freedom and this also is a part of education. Freedom implies not only being independent of other people but also independent of one's own moods and impulses. The man who is a slave to his senses and cannot keep his impulse under control is neither free nor self-sufficient. Temperament and service therefore, have their place in education, for it is by these means that this third aspect of freedom can be learned (Fadipe and Adepoju 2006).

Self-sufficiency then has three meanings. The first is that one should not depend upon others for one's daily bread. The second is that one should have developed the power to acquire knowledge for oneself. The third is that a man should be able to rule himself, to control his senses and his thoughts. Slavery of the body is wrong. The body falls into slavery for the sake of the stomach, therefore, a free man must know how to earn his living through handicraft. Slavery of the mind is wrong. If a man cannot think and reach an independent judgment his mind is enslaved; a free

-A. G.

man must acquire the power of independent thought. Slavery of the emotions and the sense is also wrong, and it is an essential part of education to overcome this tyranny.

ISSN: 2408

Nigerian government towards realizing the goal of self-reliance, decided that the quality of instruction at all levels of education has to be oriented among other things towards inculcating the values of:

1. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual
2. Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions and acquisition of competences necessary for self-reliance (NPE, 2004).

Government also intended to vigorously implement the policy by emphasizing:

1. Life-long education as the basis of the nation's educational policy.
2. Educational activities to be centered on the learners for maximum selfdevelopment and self-fulfillment.
3. The education system to be structured to develop the practice of self-learning.

This is entrenched in the national goals of Nigeria as contained in the National Policy on Education (2004) as the building of:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united strong and self-reliant nation
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

Circumstances Surrounding Reform/Innovation

There are lists of circumstances surrounding reform/innovation which leaders should take into cognizance. These include:

1. Resistance to Change

Probably, the most common way people relate to change is to resist it. It can be resisted by disagreeing with a new policy. We can procrastinate, argue, rationalize or even sabotage a change initiative simply by ignoring it. All forms of resistance are counter-innovative and thwart human intentionality to create or own change. Resistance gives power to status quo or cultural inertia that by its nature persists. The problem is that these initiatives are rarely effective because everything being done to change something is being resisted. This is how many issues persisted even when there is widespread agreement that something should change.

2. Coping Strategies

In organization, people may result to coping strategy in innovation. Coping might be viewed as a positive alternative to resistance, as the coping person works within the circumstances effectively. energy expended in resisting is now re-directed to problem-solving and designing ways to overcome barriers to accomplishing one's intention. Coping can drive innovation, but only as a re-

Creation and Sustenance of Innovation as Educational Reform Strategy in Nigeria

Ossai (Ph.D) and E. N. Nwalado

action to the circumstances, not as an intentional force in creating new circumstances. It is argued that successful coping solution will often thwart and even undermine attempt at further innovation in a coping context.

Towards Sustainable Educational Reform/Innovation in Nigeria

To make educational reform effective and sustainable in Nigeria, the following should be considered:

1. There is need to base educational reform policy on attainable goals/objectives
2. It should conform with ethical standards.
3. It should have focus based on stability and flexibility
4. It should be sufficiently comprehensive.
5. There is the need to control the rate at which policy changes to give room for continuity and long term planning
6. Those to be affected by a reform policy should always be involved at the planning stage.
7. There is also the need for a well-defined and clearly stated objectives of the plan and reform policy.
8. There is also the need for a centralized decision-making structure to guard against distortion or unnecessary diversion in the course of achieving the stated objectives of the reform.
9. There is the need for the provision of monitoring, coordinating, supervision and evaluation mechanisms, which will serve as follow-up to a planned reform policy.
10. There is the need for discipline and effective leadership to give the reform its vision and ability to translate that vision into reality.
11. There is the need to train and use educational planners for the purpose of planning reform policy in the interest of the educational system.

-A. G.

12. There is the need for the stabilization of the economy by reducing the fiscal drags and raising enough resources for educational reform that will be prudently managed.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to highlight the need to make educational reform and innovation effective and sustainable. The education system desires reform and innovation in teaching and learning and assessment practice. The environment that can harness and create wisdom and intellect of teachers should be pursued. There is need to create schools that are built in collaboration which can be assembled to harness their combined effort/talents into reform and innovation. There is need for school management to encourage new practices that generate new values to members, ensure holistic approach to transform learning experience of learners, and leaders should live up to expectation in setting pace for innovation and reform. There is need

for innovation/ reform to be a continuous process built into culture of successful organizations. *In fact innovation and reform are crucial for consideration in order to meet the millennium development goals as well as the stated vision of education.*

Recommendations

Based on the analysis and conclusion, the following recommendation were made.

- i. The schools should create and maintain the culture of reform/innovation.
- ii. Leaders should take the lead in exacting reform/innovation culture in the school system.
- iii. Individuals should take it upon themselves the responsibility of becoming a master of innovation so as to constantly invent or create experience.
- iv. School authorities should develop good attitude of research outcomes, so as to make use of relevant research outcomes to sustain innovation culture.

References

- Adepoju, T. L. (1998) Managing educational change in Nigeria. Guba's two Dimensional change strategy memograph. Department of Educational Foundation. Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo.
- Adepoju, T.L. & Olaniyi, G.B. (1999). Innovations in Primary school Administration, *Study pre-primary Edu.*, 1 (1): 77-78.
- Akomolafe, C.O. (2000). Utilization of previous and current research outcomes as a management tool for Educational development. *Nigerian journal of Educational Research and Evaluation* (2) 1. 53-56.
- Denning (2004). *Interviews: Ubiquity* 5 (8).
- Dynarski, M, Agodimi, R, Heawised, S, Novak, T, Carey, N, & Campuzano, L (2007). *Effectiveness of reading from the first student cohort*. Washington DC: Department of Educating Institute of Education Science.
- Fagerberg, (2004). "Innovation: a guide to the literature". Online available at www.google.com. Retrieved February 15, 2014.
- Fadipe, J.O. & Adepoju, T.L (2006) Planning for educational reform and innovation. In Babalola, J.B, Ayeni, A.O, Adedeji, S.O, Suleiman, A,A & Arikewayo, M.O

-A. G.

(Eds), *Educational Management: Thoughts and practice*, Ibadan: Codat Publications.

Creation and Sustenance of Innovation as Educational Reform Strategy in Nigeria **Ossai (Ph.D) and E. N. Nwalado**

Federal Government of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education (NPE)* Lagos: NERDC.

Jenni (2009). Organizational innovation experts: at your services. *Journal on creativity, imagination, ideas and innovation in Business* (5) 2.

Miles, M.B. (1964). *Introduction to Education*. New York: Bureau of Publication, Columbia University.

Obanjo, P. (2004). *The dilemma of Education in Africa*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig). Plc.

Salami, K.A. (2009). Major Concepts in educational planning. In Salami, K.A., Okemakinde, T., Adeyemo, A.O & Oketunbi, O.A. (Eds) *Educational Management*. Oyo: Odumatt Press and publishers.

San Francisco, C.A, & Jossey-Bassey, (2008). *Cited inside Microsoft a system framework for guiding innovative school reform*. Online available at innovationschoolonline.com. retrieved February 16, 2014.

Selman, J. (2006). *Leadership and innovation: Relating to circumstances and change*. Online available at www.innovation.cc. Retrieved February 18, 2014.

