
Managing Innovations in Online Registration and Educational Policies for Service Delivery in Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study examined the management of innovations in online registration and educational policies in universities in Rivers State of Nigeria. Two (2) research questions and 2 hypotheses were answered and tested in the study, respectively. The design of the study was the analytic descriptive survey, with the population as the 3 public universities in Rivers State. These universities have 8059 teaching and non-teaching personnel, who acted as participants in the study, from which 2418 (795 teaching and 1623 non-teaching) were drawn as sample, using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument of the study was a validated 10-item instrument titled 'Managing Innovations in Online Registration and Educational Policies for Service Delivery Scale' (MIOREPSDS), designed by the researchers in the modified 4-point Likert scale model, with a reliability index of 0.92 obtained using the Cronbach Alpha method. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while z-test was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study showed that online registration are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State, through organization of training programmes to allocation of adequate time for online registration and that changes in educational policies are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State, through continuous training of personnel to act as change agents to continuous sensitization of the user system. The study also established significant differences between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways innovations in online registration and educational policies are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. Based on the foregoing, it was concluded that proactive management of innovations in online registration and educational policies facilitate service delivery in universities in Rivers State. Recommendations made are that university administrators should put hands on deck to ensure that initiatives among them organization of orientation programmes to allocation of enough time for online registration exercises are effectively carried out for positive development of the institutions and also that management should ensure proper adjustment of staff and students to resultant changes by engaging in measures such as feedback and process consultations.

Keywords: Managing, Online Registration, Educational Policies, Service Delivery

INTRODUCTION

One major feature of living systems is that they are continuously involved in what may be technically seen as a system of unending metamorphosis. Living systems exist in the society, which accommodate them and all other systems. In turn, the society (which is also a living system) influences the nature and mode of operations of all the systems operating within it. On its own, the society is involved in constant and continuous transformation as dictated by self-inflicted, natural and social forces. As society struggles to contain the transformationary trend, and continue in the struggle for survival, certain new ideas and activities set in. These new ideas and activities may come in the form of innovations and or changes in society with ruptured effects on all the systems within the society.

Systems (living) in society include educational, health, political, military, banking, the economy, religious among others. These systems see to the preservation of the various components of the society, in terms of the preservation of societal knowledge, health needs of the society, the system of statecraft, the security needs, financial management, societal and individual economic needs and a system of worship of the supernatural, respectively.

In line with the established fact that, society becomes transformed continuously and constantly, changes and innovations are needed to stabilize the existence of man in society. Transformations in the society do influence the workings of the other societal components.

In the education system, societal pressures, arising from transformations, do have both positive and negative implications on the running and workings of the system, which make school administrators and other significant school members to devise means and or approaches for sustaining educational organisations in their quest for delivering the needed services to clients of the school system, as society requires. These are done through deliberate and indeliberate management of school activities that are occasioned by innovations and changes from the larger society.

Innovations can be defined as new ideas, creative thoughts, new imaginations in the form of devise or method (Wikipedia, 2018). The knowledge agency furthers that, it is often seen as the application of better solutions that meet new requirements, unarticulated needs or existing market needs. Put differently, ToolsHere.com (2018) notes that, innovations are not just represented by introducing or implementing new ideas and methods. Little wonder, it is submitted that innovations are processes that involve multiple activities to uncover new ways to do things. Innovations are of different types. These include incremental, disruptive, architectural and radical innovations (Lopez, 2015). For the scholar, while incremental innovations are the most common forms of innovation that utilizes existing technology and increases value to the customer, within an existing market, disruptive innovations also referred to as stealthy innovations, involves the application of new technologies or proposes to a company's current market. Differently, architectural innovations involve taking the lessons, skills and overall technology and applying them with different markets while the radical innovations are those which think of most when considering innovations that give birth to new ideas.

The foregoing innovations do occur in the school system and have the propensity to make or mar the service delivery processes in the universities, administrators in the bid to ensure effective service delivery have introduced innovative means of registration and new school policies. These are online registration and new policies to guide registration processes and general policies on school administration. It is based on these that the researchers as school management experts draw the interest to examine the ways online registration and new educational policies may be managed in universities. Thus;

Managing Online Registration as an Innovation for Service Delivery

Today, the international society has become a global village. This has been made possible by the forces of globalization, which came with Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ICT is a network, which offers a steadily expanding range of new services that have major economic consequences for the standardization of information (Nwafor, 2012). For Akpan and Bassey (2011), Information and Communication Technology is a computer based tools, used by organisational personnel in the processing of their information and communication needs. ICT does more than is described in Akpan and Bassey and in the presentation by Yusuf (2007). It encompasses the computer hardware and software, the network and several other devices, e.g. audio, video, photograph and camera among others. But Nwafor (2005) in Nwafor (2012) has the Information and Communication Technology available for university administration in Rivers State of Nigeria to include e-mail, Internet, intranet, teleconference, facsimile (fax), minicomputer, microcomputer, mainframe computer, word processing computer and basic website. Although Nwafor's list provide the foregoing, it is pertinent to note that more ICT gadgets have been introduced since year 2005.

From the list of ICT gadgets presented by Yusuf and Nwafor, majority, if not all of them have made themselves amenable in the administration of education generally and in sub-areas. One of the sub-areas, which ICT has helped enormously in school administration is on-line registration of students. According to Oluwuo (Personal Communication, October 25, 2015), online registration may be seen as a process by which individuals in organisational settings, like schools, parastatals, agencies and other outfits, with large clientele, key in their individual or personal data, into the data base of such organizations. One organization, with over bloated clientele in this country, is educational organisations. Educational institutions make use of online registration at the point of documenting students and staff information. As it concerns students, Agha (2015) notes that online registration enables students to register for courses they intend to run in the university. It also allows students the world over to key in their individual data, post academic data, register and drop courses as they wish, apart from that, it also makes it possible for schools or any other organization to join the overall example in information advancement in the national and international society and be abreast with new innovations in educational administration. These identified variables must have informed Aitken (2007) to comment that the role of ICT in tertiary education is expanding and changing.

Following from the foregoing, it is therefore not an understatement to say that the introduction of online registration in institutions of higher education across the nation and the international society is a welcome idea. As Adepoju and Alhassan (2008) summarised, it is seen as a form of relief for the hitherto redundant, costly, extortionary and time wasting manual registration that had been the practice before.

Despite the perceived benefits of online registration in organisations like school and other agencies, it has been reported that online registration suffers some challenges which pose problems to the administrators of the organizations. Agha (2015) and Akpan and Bassey (2011) list these challenges to include slow download of website in the process of doing online registration, wrong allocation of units to courses, delay in acceptance of financial details by the system, delay from banks in financial details to schools, problems of power failure, inadequacy of systems for the registration process, invalid matriculation numbers or missing names and lack of students data. When issues like these occur, it become pretty difficult to do smooth online registration and therefore, present problems to educational administration.

From the foregoing, it becomes imperative that educational administrators and other stakeholders in the school system should take appropriate steps to ensure effective

management of online registration as an innovation in the school system. To ensure effective management of the innovation in the school system, scholars and researchers have come up with some ideas. These include the ideas from Agha (2015), Afangideh and Nwideduh (2010) and Akpan and Bassey (2011). The researchers and scholars found and took the position that schools should organize orientation programmes for students and staff, stimulate private sector participation in online registration, mount training and retraining programmes for staff, increase electricity supply and allocate adequate time for the online registration. This study is therefore, prepared to see how this variable when adhered to will enhance effective online registration for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Managing Innovations in Educational Policies for Service Delivery

Any organization, whether public or private, singularly owned or in partnership and groups, must have some rules that direct the conduct of people and activities in such organisations in order to achieve the purpose of the organization. This becomes important in the sense that, if the organization cannot achieve its purpose, which is the measure of its effectiveness, it should go into extinction (Ukeje, Okorie & Nwagbara, 1990; Afangideh, 2005). These rules which organization adopts are referred to as policies.

Conceptually, researchers and scholars see policy as a concept, from different perspectives. According to Agha (2015), policy implies rule, plan or game plan that is often generally produced in appreciation of long-term objectives. It is also a particular sort of proclamation of choices which highlight the expectations or arrangements of a given association in respect to what to accomplish or the accomplishment of authoritative objectives (Okunamiri, 2005). The positions taken by Agha (2015) and Okunamiri (2005) are not quite different from each other; rather, they seem to complement Ocho (2003) conceptualization that policies are decisions of people in authority, which express organizational intentions for achieving the purpose of the organization.

Ocho (2003) furthers that policies are authoritative judgements which establish bases for administrative actions. Consequently, it will not be an understatement, to see policies in education, as the specified statements of decisions, which highlight the aims or plans of educational planners, in respect to what to do for the accomplishment of educational objectives. Little wonder, Ocho equally comments that in education, educational policies represents government thinking, as to lines along which the affairs of the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, should be conducted and are the practical guides to ministry and school officials in school matters. In this regard, it is safe to refer to educational policies as the compass of the educational system.

In Nigeria, we have the national policy on education. This policy spells out what every level of education should do for the society. The national policy on education came into existence in 1977, since then; there have been series of revisions, with each coming with new sets of things to be achieved after attendance at each level of education.

Educational policies came into the school system as changes and innovations. As a result, it presents some complex problems to managers in the school system. Scholars and researchers agree that certain societal and institutional variables are responsible for failures in the implementation of government policies on education. Specifically, Ocho (2003) lists the constraints to policy planning and implementation in Nigeria to include planning without data or planning without facts, political instability, financial indiscipline, lack of adequate evaluation of policy implementation, lack of human and material resources. Differently, Adesina as cited in Ocho (2003) sees the failures of educational policies, to come from nine factors. These factors include lack of trained and experienced managers, politicization of educational decision making, which alienates faithful implementation of policies intra and

inter organizational and personality conflict, inadequate monitoring and evaluation machineries at local, state and federal levels, underestimation of human and material resources for implementation of policies, political and society instability which fails to provide conducive atmosphere for policy implementation, political patronage and indiscipline in the management of public institutions, taking the form of ethnicity, nepotism and tribalism, financial indiscipline in the management of material resources in the public system, otherwise called corruption and fraud and lack of exemplary leadership.

An analysis on the foregoing shows that, most of the variables are obtained a decade ago. Today, educational policies seem to be failing as a result of insecurity, terrorism, kidnapping and other social vices. Consequently, the school administrator has much to do in managing changes and innovations in educational policies, if he must deliver quality services to clients of the school system. These include continuous training and retraining of personnel to act as change agents, involvement of all relevant stakeholders in planning educational policies, continuous monitoring and evaluation, effective management of educational data and continuous sensitization and orientation of the user system (Ocho, 2003; Koko & Nwiyi, 2006; Agha, 2015). It is believed that, if school administrators do these, the innovations arising from changes in educational policies will be properly adhered to for service delivery in universities.

Statement of the Problem

Universities as learning institutions provide some key services to their clients. These services include teaching, research, community service and incidental functions. As multi-dimensional and omnibus institutions, that are conscious of the effects of changes and innovations in the school system, they are saddled with the responsibility of discharging their services, effectively in line with current trends. In handling students registration processes, online registration has become the order of the day, apart from the fact that new policies in handling general school matters have been put in place. Yet, it is surprising that the major clients of the school system, hence, students still complain of issues bordering on online registration and general school policies implementation. The researchers became bordered and pondered whether the innovations in the processes of registration and policy implementation are not effectively managed for service delivery. It is based on these that the researchers derived the interest to examine the ways innovations in online registration and educational policies are managed for service delivery in universities.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined the ways innovations in online registration and educational policies are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Examine the ways online registration as an innovation is managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State
- Identify the ways innovations in educational policies are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

- In what ways are online registration as an innovation managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.
- In what ways are innovations in educational policies managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance:

- There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways online registration as an innovation is managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State
- There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways innovations in educational policies are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study was the analytic descriptive survey, with the population as the 3 public universities in Rivers State. These universities have 8059 teaching and non-teaching personnel, who acted as participants in study, from which 2418 (795 teaching and 1623 non-teaching) were drawn as sample using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument of the study was a validated 10-item instrument titled ‘Managing Innovations in Online Registration and Educational Policies for Service Delivery Scale (MIOREPSDS)’, designed by the researchers in the modified 4-point likert scale model, with a reliability index of 0.92 obtained using the Cronbach Alpha method. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while z-test was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULT

Research Question 1: In what ways are online registration as an innovation managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Mean Ratings of Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel on the Ways Online Registration as an Innovation is Managed for Service Delivery in Universities in Rivers state

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN RESPONSES					Remarks
		\bar{x}_1	SD_1	\bar{x}_2	SD_2	$\bar{x}\bar{x}$	
1	Organization of orientation programmes on online registration for students assists in easy student registration exercise.	3.15	1.03	2.59	1.12	2.87	Agreed
2	Stimulation of private sector participation in online registration quickens service delivery in universities.	3.08	1.02	2.75	1.12	2.92	Agreed
3	Continuous training of ICT personnel in schools for students registration eases the registration process.	3.14	0.99	2.73	1.08	2.94	Agreed
4	Increase in electricity supply quickens students online registration exercises.	3.23	0.98	2.75	1.06	2.99	Agreed
5	Allocating adequate time for online registration makes the process easy.	2.89	0.99	2.56	1.17	2.73	Agreed
Criterion $\bar{x} = 2.50$		3.09	1.00	2.68	1.11	2.89	Agreed

Legend

\bar{x}_1	=	Mean: Teaching Personnel
SD_1	=	Standard Deviation 1
\bar{x}_2	=	Mean: Non-Teaching Personnel
SD_2	=	Standard Deviation 2
\bar{x}	=	Weighted Mean

Scale

1.00 – 2.49	=	Disagree
2.50 – 4.00	=	Agree

Data on table 1 show that all the items (1-5) had mean sets above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were adjudged as the ways online registration are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. In summary, with an aggregate mean set of 2.89, above the criterion of 2.50, teaching and non-teaching personnel agreed that orientation programmes for students, private sector simulation to participate in online registration, continuous training of ICT personnel, increase in electricity supply and allocation of adequate time for online registration are ways online registration are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: In what ways are innovations in educational policies managed for service delivery in Universities in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Mean Ratings of Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel on Ways Innovations in Educational Policies are Managed for Service Delivery in Universities in Rivers state.

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN RESPONSES					Remarks
		\bar{x}_1	SD_1	\bar{x}_2	SD_2	\bar{x}	
6	Continuous training of personnel to act as change agents enhances service delivery.	3.13	0.97	2.72	1.09	2.93	Agreed
7	The involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the management of educational policies makes implementation easy.	3.24	0.94	2.72	1.10	2.98	Agreed
8	Continuous monitoring evaluation of school policies makes implementation easy.	3.13	1.02	2.79	1.13	2.96	Agreed
9	Effective management of educational based data make for quick service delivery.	2.95	1.03	2.73	1.08	2.84	Agreed
10	Continuous sensitization of the users of school policies eases school administration.	3.14	1.05	2.71	1.11	2.93	Agreed
Criterion $\bar{x} = 2.50$		3.12	1.00	2.73	1.10	2.93	Agreed

* Legend and scale for Table 1 apply.

Data on table 2 show that, all the items (6-10) had mean sets, above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were therefore adjudged as the ways innovations in educational policies are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. In summary, with an aggregate mean set of 2.93, above the criterion of 2.50, teaching and non-teaching personnel, agreed that, continuous training of personnel, involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the management process, continuous monitoring for evaluation, effective management of education based data and continuous sensitization of the user system are ways innovations in educational policies are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways online registration as an innovation is managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

non-teaching personnel on the ways innovations in educational policies are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION

Managing on-line registration as an innovation for service delivery

The study revealed that on-line registration as an innovation is managed for service delivery in universities through the organization of orientation programmes for students, stimulation of private sector participation in on-line registration, training and re-training of ICT personnel in schools, increased electricity supply, allocation of adequate time for on-line registration exercises. This finding agrees with the position of Agha (2015), and Afangideh and Nwideduh (2010) that given the uniqueness of innovations in ICT, there is need for orientation programmes to be organized for the final users, as such programmes expose the users to the knowledge of how to operate the hardware and software. Universities, knowing the difficulties students and staff may face, while attempting to use innovations in online registration, usually organise orientation programmes. During such programmes, resource persons use simulation and demonstration methods to introduce the users to the process of using innovations in online registration.

The fact that increasing electricity supply is found to be one of the ways innovations in on-line registration can be managed supports the position of Akpan and Bassey (2011), that if electricity supply should increase more than usual, it will provide the students the ample opportunities to adequately key in their individual data and information into the system and eventually upload into the data bank. This will go a long way to reduce complains and as well save time and reduce the overcrowded situation being faced by management.

The null hypotheses that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways online registration as an innovation is managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State was rejected. This agrees with the findings of Aitken (2007) that, one of the ways to make it easy for students to freely access and use the online registration system is to make the site easy to use, access and read. Once the site is easy to use, accessed and read, students can conveniently fill their individual online registration forms anywhere and anytime without facing much hurdles and challenges of being in campus or engaging the services of other experts to upload their personal details.

The implication of these findings is that if orientation programmes are organised for students on regular basis, simulation of private sector participation in online registration encouraged training and retraining of personnel are constantly practiced and power supply is relatively constant, it will go a long way in ensuring that on-line registration as an innovation is effectively managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Managing innovations in educational policies for service delivery

The second finding of the study revealed that the ways innovations in educational policies are managed for service delivery are continuous training of personnel to act as change agents, involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the planning and management process, continuous monitoring and evaluation, effective management of educational data, continuous sensitization of the user system. This finding agrees with the position of Ocho (2003) that for any change to be fully implemented in an organisation, those in authority, must ensure that everybody that will participate in the implementation of the change is involved in the change process. Organisations will only implement changes successfully if those in authority act as

salesmen whose goal is to convince every member of the organisation on the need for change and also ensure that all members of the organisation participate in the change process.

This finding also agrees with Koko and Nwiyi (2006) who posit that, effective management of educational data is one of the ways of managing innovations in educational policies for service delivery. The problem of outdated, inaccurate and loss of data has been identified by many scholars as a great challenge in the implementation and management of innovations in educational policies. When data are effectively managed mostly by the use of modern technology, the risk of loss of data and inaccurate data will be a thing of the past.

The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on how innovations in educational policies are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State was rejected. This agrees with the findings of Okunamiri (2005) that, continuous training and re-training of personnel to act as change agents will enable them to be abreast with the unfolding changes and innovations in areas of education, across the globe and thereby exposing them to ideas that will guarantee continuous introduction of new and dynamic changes and knowledge for effective actualization of educational goals and objectives. Our universities can adapt and compete favourably with the trend in the global society if these ideas are put in place and effectively managed.

The implication of these findings is that involvement of all relevant stakeholders, continuous training and re-training of personnel to act as change agents, continuous monitoring and evaluation and continuous sensitization of the user system, if adequately adopted and implemented will yield positive results in the management of innovations in educational policies for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that appropriate management of innovations in online registration and educational policies are needed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are offered for implementation:

- To ensure that online registration as an innovation is effectively implemented, university administrators should put all hands on deck to ensure that initiatives such as organization of orientation programmes for students, stimulation of private sector participation in online registration, training and re-training of ICT personnel in schools, increase electricity supply, allocation of adequate time for online registration exercises are effectively carried out for positive development of the institution.
- When changes and innovations occur in educational policies in the universities, management should ensure proper adjustment of staff and students to resultant change by engaging in measures such as feedbacks and process consultations.

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