Managing Innovations in Curricular Offerings and Modes of Communication for Service Delivery in Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study examined the management of innovations in curricular offerings and modes of communication for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. 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 the study participants, 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 Curricular Offerings and Modes of Communication for Service Delivery Scale' (MICOMCSDS), designed by the researchers in the modified 4-point Likert scale model, with a reliability index of 0.91, 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 show that training and retraining of school personnel to the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities and that structuring of the administrative hierarchy and using informal communication channels like the grapevine, are the ways innovations in curricular offerings and modes of communication are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. The study also established no significant differences between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel, on the ways, innovations in curricular offerings and modes of communication are managed for service delivery in Universities in Rivers State. It was therefore concluded that proactive management of innovations in curricular offerings and modes of communication enhances service delivery in universities in Rivers State. Consequently, it was recommended that university administrators should ensure that every member of the organization comes in tune with changes in universities and those new innovations are effectively communicated to every member of the institution.

Keywords: Management, Innovations, Curricular Offering, Modes of Communication, Service Delivery.

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INTRODUCTION

Societies, at the local, national and international levels, are constantly changing. This continuous transformation, are occasioned by new requirements, based on some natural forces, social pressures and the influences, demands and requirements of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These various transformations have both negative and positive implications on the various components of the society. These components include the education, health, economic, political, religious, military, agricultural sectors of the society, among others. These components play major roles in society.

Agreed that the various components of the society play significant roles depending on what society ascribes to them, one of the components, hence the educational component plays roles that may be considered as most significant. This is the fact that, it is responsible for the transmission of the cultural knowledge, skills and values of the people, from one generation to another (Schofield, 1990). Based on the foregoing, it would not be an understatement to note that, the education system keeps the society alive for the past, the present and the future. Little wonder, modern scholars, among them is S. O. Oluwuo (Personal Communication, January 10, 2017) made emphasis on education for sustainability of societal knowledge, skills and values.

Educational systems in the Nigerian context are of three major levels. These are the basic, post basic and tertiary levels of education. The basic level of education takes care of education of kindergartens, primary education and junior secondary education while the post basic level takes care of education at the senior secondary schools. Differently, the tertiary level of education takes charge of education in Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnic, Monotechnics and allied institutions.

As a component of the society that sees to the education of the young, the needy and the desiring, the school system at various levels, selects contents to teach to their clients, the totality which can be considered as curricular offerings. Apart from the contents to be internalize by the learners, the implementers of the school curriculum (teachers, instructors, lecturers) choose particular modes of communication for use in transmitting the curricular contents to the learners. Based on the assumption of the present excursion, that frequent transformations of the society call for new curricular offerings and new modes of communication, in line with the exigencies and requirements of present day, school administrators and significant others are faced with the onerous task of managing new curricular offerings for effective teaching and how to ensure that appropriate modes of communication are employed in transmitting contents for effective service delivery, respectively.

The foregoing calls for ways of handling the new offerings and communicative modes for transmission. Therefore, the proceeding sections of this presentation will centre on the ways for managing innovations in curricular offerings and modes of communication for service delivery in schools. Thus;

Managing Innovations in Curricular Offerings for Service Delivery

Educational institutions (irrespective of the level) exist in society to perform certain functions. These functions have often been summarized to be the transmission of the worthwhile knowledge, skills and values of the society to its people from one generation to another. In order to achieve this major feat, schools teach certain contents to its clients. The contents taught in schools are technically referred to as curriculum or what is also referred to as curricular offerings. Conceptually, Agha (2015) sees curricular offerings, as the academic contents taught in a school or in a specific course programme. For Lansing (2011),

educational curricular may in like manner incorporate a school's educational essentials for graduation. For instance, the courses students need to take and pass; the amount of credits students need to complete and other distinctive necessities.

From time to time and as determined by the pace of changes in society, educational institutions introduce new sets of courses to be taught as reflections of on-going events in the environment. Contemporarily, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Aids Education, Entrepreneurship education, among others are taught in schools as a result of their needs in society.

Agreed that the new changes in society come with innovations into the school system. However, it is expedient to place on record that changes in curricular offerings present some complex problems to school managers and administrators. These may include the lack of manpower to teach the newly introduced contents, students apathy towards the new course offerings, lack of finances to provide for the required curricular changes, adherence to some specific modes or methods of teaching and the non-use of Information and Communication Technology in implementing new curricular offerings. These have been sources of worry to educational leaders. Arising from the foregoing, experts in educational administration and managements have come up with some solutions, so that the school system can continuously deliver services to its clients, irrespective of the changes in school programmes or offerings. These include training and retraining of personnel, sensitization of students on the new curricular offerings, increased funding of the educational system, deliberate and periodic review of teaching methodologies and the use of ICT in teaching, as dictated by exigencies of the time. These enjoy empirical and scholarly backings from Lockie (2011), and Akubuilo (2012). The finding of the present research effort will therefore debunk or confirm this as the case may be in universities in Rivers State.

Managing Innovation in Modes of Communication for Service Delivery

On a daily basis, humans as members of the educational institutions at whatever levels involve themselves in webs of social interactions. These social interactions are in nearly all facets of school life, among them are administration, teaching, extracurricular and outdoor activities and communication with external stakeholders. These webs of social interactions can only take place through the conveyance of information and attitudes from one person to another, which is often seen as communication.

Conceptually, communication may be seen as the means through which information is passed from one person to another (Agabi & Ebong, 2004). Put in a different way, Segera (2009) perceives communication as the transmission of attitudes, feelings, insights and facts to others with the aim of influencing or modifying their behaviours. For Peretomode (2006), it is seen as the transmission of information, feelings or messages from a source to a receiver. Following from the discussions on the foregoing paragraphs, it is pertinent to note that communication is a multidimensional concept whose uses and amenability cut across various areas of knowledge and this may inform why there are multiplicities of definitions and this confirms the assertion by Okorie (2009) that there cannot be a unified way of defining communication.

Communication as an instrument for social interaction has been used across disciplines and many other areas of human endeavours. Communication thrives in the school system, the civil service, the military, the banking industry ,among others. In the school system, communication is used in general school administration, teaching, decision making, public relations, among others. Before the advent of modernity, communication between individuals and groups used to be done through traditional modes of communication like issuance of the palm fronds, bird feathers, and signs used by secret societies and face to face

communication. These modes of communication were used in traditional societies, and are still tenable.

As modernity sets in, new modes of communication became the order of the day. These include letter writing, the telegram and the wired telephone. Another mode of communication was introduced in the 90s and has been operational since then. This is the Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM). Since then, the modes of communication have changed. There are the internet, the use of short message service (sms), the different social networks like 2go, Imo, Whatsapp, Instagram, Viber, BBM, Facebook, Wechart, Twitter, among others. These have become the modes of communication in the educational sector and other systems. What is of paramount importance is how to manage these innovations in the modes of communication for service delivery in universities.

Eminent educational experts like Okorie (2009) and Babalola and Ayeni (2009) have come up with the strategies for managing innovations in modes of communication for service delivery in organisations. These include the effective re-structuring of the administrative hierarchy, and adoption of the use of management information and ICT in organizational activities. For Achuonye (2007) and Afangideh and Aleru (2014), organizations that wish to manage innovations in modes of communication should organize capacity building programmes for their personnel and decentralize communication channels. It is no wonder Peretomode (2006) prefers the use of information communication channels like the grapevine to ensure effective communication. Whether these strategies are viable ones is what one cannot ascertain, this can only be done by empirical investigations.

Statement of the Problem

Universities as citadels of international studies are saddled with the responsibilities of teaching, research, community service and incidental functions. As institutions with multifaceted functions, and conscious of the fact that vibrations from the larger society have implications on the society itself and the components of the society, they have it as a duty to deliver effective services to the clients of the university system, in consonance with current requirements at the local, national and international levels. One way of doing this is through appropriate management of innovations in curricular offerings and modes of communication. This is what university managers seek to achieve, they keep on introducing new courses and corresponding modes of communication, for transmitting curricular contents. Despite these efforts, the major clients of the university system, appear to be constantly and continuously complaining of overloaded curriculum and inappropriate methods of delivery, as research findings, public opinion, scholarly evidences and general observations, have shown. Based on these, the researchers became burdened and pondered whether innovations in curricular offerings and the corresponding modes of communication for transmitting contents are not properly managed for service delivery. It is based on these, the researchers drew the interest to examine the ways innovations in curricular offerings and modes of communication enhances service delivery in universities.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined the ways innovations in curricular offerings and modes of communication are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Ascertain the ways innovations in curricular offerings are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State

- Determine the ways innovations in the modes of communication 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 innovations in curricular offerings managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State?
- In what ways are innovations in modes of communication 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 innovations in curricular offerings are 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 modes of communication 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 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 Curricular Offerings and Modes of Communication for Service Delivery Scale' (MICOMCSDS), designed by the researchers, in the modified 4-point Likert scale model with a reliability index of 0.91 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.

RESULTS

The results of the study came from the answers to the research questions and results to test of hypotheses. Thus:

Research Question 1: In what ways are innovations in curricular offerings 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 Innovations in Curricular Offerings are Managed for Service Delivery in Universities in Rivers state.

		MEAN RESPONSES					
S/N	ITEMS	$\overline{x}_1$	SD_1	$\overline{x}_2$	SD_2	$\overline{xx}$	Remarks
1	Training and re-training of personnel makes for effective delivery in universities.	3.20	0.93	2.70	1.14	2.95	Agreed
2	Sensitization of students on new curricular offerings enhances service delivery.	2.99	1.01	2.72	1.15	2.86	Agreed
3	Increasing the level of funding of school curricular programmes makes service delivery easy.	2.97	0.98	2.82	1.12	2.89	Agreed
4	Review of teaching methodologies makes it easy for students to understand contents.	3.10	1.06	2.26	1.19	2.68	Agreed
5	Use of ICT facilities for implementation of school curricular offerings makes teaching service delivery easy.	2.96	1.07	2.67	1.10	2.82	Agreed
	Criterion $\overline{x}$ = 2.50	**3.04**	**1.01**	**2.63**	**1.14**	**2.84**	**Agreed**

Legend   **Scale**
$\overline{x}_1$ =   Mean: Teaching Personnel   1.00 – 2.49 = Disagree
SD_1 =   Standard Deviation 1   2.50 – 4.00 = Agree
$\overline{x}_2$ =   Mean: Non-Teaching Personnel
SD_2 =   Standard Deviation 2
$\overline{xx}$ =   Weighted Mean

Data on table 1 show that, all the items (1-5) had mean sets above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were therefore adjudged as the ways innovations in curricular offerings are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

In summary, with an aggregate mean of 2.84, above the criterion mean of 2.50, all the respondents agreed that training and retraining of personnel, sensitization of students, increase in fund level, review of teaching methods and use of ICT facilities are ways innovations in curricular offerings are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: In what ways are innovations in modes of communication 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 the Ways Innovations in Modes of Communication Managed for Service Delivery in Universities in Rivers state

		MEAN RESPONSES					
S/N	ITEMS	$\overline{x}_1$	SD_1	$\overline{x}_2$	SD_2	$\overline{xx}$	Remarks
6	Effective re-structuring of the administrative hierarchy improves communication in schools.	2.65	1.04	2.56	1.07	2.61	Agreed
7	Adopting the use of management information system in ICT improves communication in schools.	3.01	1.01	2.62	1.17	2.82	Agreed
8	Organizing capacity building programmes for school members on new ways of communication.	2.95	1.01	2.76	1.13	2.86	Agreed
9	Decentralization of communication channels makes for good communication flow.	2.52	1.11	2.41	1.13	2.47	Disagreed
10	Using informal communication channels like	2.38	1.06	2.14	1.11	2.26	Disagreed

grapevine enhances communication in educational institution.							
Criterion $\bar{x}$ = 2.50		**2.70**	**1.05**	**2.49**	**1.12**	**2.60**	**Agreed**

* Legend and scale for Table 1 apply.

Data on table 2 show that items 6, 7, and 8, had their mean sets above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were adjudged as the ways innovations in modes of communication are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. However, items 9 and 10 had mean sets of 2.47 and 2.26, respectively, which is below the criterion mean of 2.50 and were therefore denied agreement as the ways innovations in modes of communication are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. In summary, with an aggregate mean set of 2.60, above the criterion mean of 2.50, teaching and non-teaching personnel agreed that re-structuring of the administrative hierarchy, effectively, adopting management information system and ICT use, organizing capacity building programmes for personnel, decentralization of communication channels and using informal communication channels like grapevine to enhance communication are ways innovations in modes of communication are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on how innovations in curricular offerings are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Table 3: Summary of z-test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel on the Ways Innovations in Curricular Offerings are Managed for Service Delivery in Universities in Rivers State.

Subjects	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	z-Observed	z - Crit	Df.	Results
Teaching personnel	790	3.04	1.01				Significant (Reject)
				9.11	1.96	2391	
Non-teaching personnel	1603	2.63	1.14				

Legend

N = Number of Subjects   z-obj = z- observed
$\bar{x}$= Mean   z-Crit = z Critical Value
SD = Standard Deviation   df = Degree of Freedom

Data on table 3 show summaries of scores, means, standard deviations and z-test of difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways innovations in curricular offerings are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. The z-test value calculated and used in testing the hypotheses stood at 9.11 while the z-critical value stood at 1.96 using 2391 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance.

At 0.05 level of significance and 2391 degrees of freedom, the calculated z-value of 9.11 is greater than the z-critical value of 1.96. Hence, there is a significant difference between the respondents. Consequently, the researchers rejected the hypothesis in favour of the alternative that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways innovations in curricular offerings are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

H$_{02}$:   There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways innovations in modes of communication are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Table 4: Summary of z-test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel on the Ways Innovations in Modes of Communication are Managed for Service Delivery in Universities in Rivers State.

Subjects	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	z-Observed	z - Crit	Df.	Results
Teaching personnel	790	2.70	1.05				Significant
				4.67	1.96	2391	(Reject)
Non-teaching personnel	1603	2.49	1.12				

The legend for Table 3 applies.

Data on table 4 show summaries of scores, means, standard deviations and z-test of difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways innovations in modes of communication are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. The z-test value, calculated and used in testing the hypothesis, stood at 4.67 while the z-critical value stood at 1.96 using 2391 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance.

At 0.05 level of significance and 2391 degrees of freedom, the calculated z-value of 4.67 is greater than the z-critical value of 1.96. Hence, there is a significant difference between the respondents. Consequently, the researchers rejected the hypotheses in favour of the alternative that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways innovations in modes of communication are managed for service delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Managing Innovations in Curricular Offerings for Service Delivery in Universities

The first finding of the study revealed that innovations in curricular offerings are managed for service delivery in universities through training and retraining of personnel for effective delivery, sensitization of students, increasing the level of funding, review of teaching methodologies, use of ICT facilities for implementation. Also, a corresponding third finding from hypotheses found a significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways innovations in curricular offerings are manage for service delivery in universities in Rivers State. These findings agree with Lockie (2011) and Akibuilo (2012). A possible explanation for these trends are based on introduction of new course offerings in universities and efforts made by universities to handle them. This implies that universities that succeed in handling new courses male use of appropriate curricular strategies.

Managing Innovations in Modes of Communication for Service Delivery in Universities

The second finding of the study revealed that innovations in modes of communication can be managed through effective re-structuring of administrative hierarchy, adopting the use of management information system and ICT, organizing capacity building programmes for personnel, decentralization of communication channels, using informal channels like grapevine to enhance communication. Also, a corresponding forth finding established a significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching personnel on the ways innovations in modes of communication are managed for service delivery in

universities in Rivers State. These findings agree with Okorie (2009), Babalola and Ayeni (2009), Achuonye (2009), Afangideh and Aleru (2014) and Peretomode (2006), whose works find these variables are the ways for managing innovations in modes of communication. A possible explanation for this may be in the fact that for some years now, a lot of changes have occurred in modes of communication and institutions have used differing means to manage them. These findings imply that universities who have succeeded in managing innovations in modes of communication are sure to deliver effective services.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the use of appropriate curricular and administrative strategies in managing innovations in curricular offerings and modes of communication are strong indices for attaining appreciable levels of service delivery in universities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the discussions on them and their accompanying implications, the following recommendations are offered:

- To ensure that innovation in curricular offerings are effectively managed for service delivery, university administrators should ensure that every member of the organization comes in tune with the said change and also ensure that every member of the organization participates in the change process.
- When changes and innovations occur in the modes of communication in the universities, management should see to the fact that the new innovations are effectively communicated to every member of the institution and also ensure that proactive and collaborative efforts should be of utmost prejudice.

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