

Factors Hampering Scientific Research in Sudanese Universities With Reference To Problem Formulation and Hypotheses

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Abstract

Supervisors in Sudan are heavily depended upon when conferring a post graduate degree and this technique of supervisor's reports, however, may not fully regard all the factors that hampering research process. The paper investigates what at first appears to be a unique constraint in designing of researches whose variables always are carried by people (elements). Most previous analyses, however, illustrate only the administrative factor that hampering the actual conducting of research. The paper adds new factors which never been investigated before. That is, the statutory factor and conceptual factors in its next sections. The paper also elucidates both quantitative and qualitative approaches are important factors when dealing with scientific research problems and hypotheses, and how the later is more important when other research supporters such as research centers are lacking. The qualitative approach is also an important element in facilitating the writing of history-textbooks.

Key Words: Supervisors, Sudan, statutory, conceptual

1. Introduction

It is said that epistemology is the science of knowing. Methodology as a subfield of epistemology might be called the science of finding (Rubin, Bobbie: 1993). Knowing and finding are considered to be the keystone of inquiry when undertaking social researches. So, sometimes we know very little, and sometime we know a lot about a particular phenomenon. Research methodologists adopt for each kind of the different scenarios a method of research. That is when we know very little, we adopt qualitative methods to build theory that can be tested in future studies and to advance also our conceptualization of it. We use quantitative methods to study a phenomenon about which we already know much. Before mentioning the aim of writing this paper, let me cite something from Perry (1984) and then analyze his methodology which Mary Kelly in the blurb of the same book appreciatively described as being as "comprehensive as it is incisive". Perry has inductively shown a segregation of science from liberal arts in the intellectual life of the universities in America at that time by the following propositions

".... Students of engineering or agriculture were beyond their reach, and science increasingly seemed split off from philosophical inquiry or artistic appreciation. The defenders of culture sometimes disparage those great devices of specialization, the Ph. D. and the dissertation, as enfeebling enemies of rich and genteel discourse. Though the term two cultures' was introduced by the British scientist novelist C. P. Snow only in 1959, in fact the Post – Civil War University witnessed a segregation of science from liberal arts that would have astonished Cotton Mather or Thomas Jefferson and that has remained a prominent feature of intellectual life ever since." (Perry, 1984: 286).

The relationship between the variables which has been observed by Perry; the use of a variable language to construct theory; and the description of the association that might logically be expected to exist between particular attributes of different variables will be discussed later when speaking about research hypotheses. So we will refer to the above citation for exemplification.

2. Methodology

It has been observed that researches pertaining to social studies presented lately in Sudan Universities have repeatedly arrived at the same conclusions and expound the same recommendations. Doing a research, I think, is becoming something like drawing a map. That is researchers in order to obtain scientific degrees just imitate each other in all the aspects of the research process. The cartographer map is not like the anthropologist detailed description who knows all the realities of the people living and who pursues very closely the realities of their lives .To test the above propositions the researcher has adopted unobtrusive observation by selecting randomly 15 English language teaching M.A theses that have been conducted in different universities in Sudan. We all know that any scientific study should come as a result of observing social phenomena. The findings of the 15 theses were the same. They can be seen in the following:

- The need for motivation as a necessary element in teaching process...

- The problem of crowded classes, however no adequate solutions were provided
- English Language learners should learn how to speak fluently.
- Writing skill should be focused on advanced levels. However beginners should write on guided composition style.
- Pair and group work are important in crowded classes, but no mention if they are also important in non – crowded classes or not.

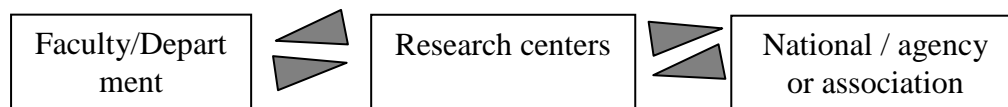
This paper will focus on the two issues mentioned in the title of this paper and will show how they can be scientifically overlapped. These two elements, the researcher thinks will help solve the problem of the same findings. There may be other approaches help elaborate this problem. The researcher hopes to see other researches to be conducted in this area this might therefore create a standard of comparison in the ELT arena. We will also attempt to verify the hypothesis which claims that many social researches done lately in Sudan have arrived at the same conclusions, and made similar recommendations. This lack of original of investigation is considered as an impediment to what we need and what we must have in the development of our nation. Granting scientific degrees should be restricted with firm academic requirements by the graduate colleges and university senates in order to guarantee the right procedures for scientific researches. If these hypotheses were proved to be true that would mean the scientific research process should be fully regarded once again in order to save time and money; centers of research should be reorganized as info financial bodies to help foster researchers on the right track.

3. Factors hampering research

3.1 .Administrative Factors

A MEL Hassan et al (2006) formally proposed some factors that had hampered research in Khartoum University. Two other factors will be added by the present paper in order to survey factors hampering research in all Sudanese Universities. They proposed the following points to show the problems of research in the University of Khartoum.

- Increase intake of students leading to over commitment of staff. Staff/students ratio was at one stage 1/86 (UNESCO) for Sudanese universities.
- Because of a poor salary structure the staff is teaching in other universities just to make ends meet. They tend to supervise more students than they can cope with. Here, accepting their second point of supervision, the researcher finds it unsound to accept the validity of the first argument because Sudan is now witnessing the establishment of many universities in many small towns and village, though you cannot escape your assigned duty of teaching in your university however poor the salary you are receiving. The real problem of research in new regional universities, The writer of this paper thinks, lies in the lack of research centers that link various agencies that regularly conduct large scale surveys with the university in order to provide the information for quite-costly and time-consuming studies.
- Some young staff that has completed their training abroad has been given administrative posts that can easily be filled by non-academic staff. This, they see as an example of brain wastage.
- There is no collaborative research projects carried out between faculties or between departments in the same faculty.
- Collaboration between faculties and relevant ministries is minimal. In this last point, however, the researcher thinks many universities in Sudan have overlooked a necessary mechanism to aid the process of collaboration which can be drawn in this diagram.



(Figure shows the role of research enters as a link between National targets and universities)

3.2. Statutory factors

Colleges and departments normally establish certain academic requirements which must be met before a degree is granted. University catalogues of graduate colleges usually differentiate between master and doctorate degree requirements. Had the requirements for graduation not been satisfied, the degree would not have been granted. The question is what is the Mechanism used by universities graduate colleges to judge if a candidate has fulfilled the required criteria for a particular degree? Many graduate councils depend solely on the examiners reports which might not unanimously agree on all the criteria of the required degree. That is some of the examiners may value research problem formulation and measurement, while other in the same committee of examination (viva) might praise other aspects such as quantitative and qualitative modes of observation.

Many graduate colleges may accept such reports which ignore the description of data analysis and never mention something about the originality of the research findings as satisfying the requirements of the degree demanded while other may reject it. For a candidate to obtain a degree s/he must fulfill all the requirements, found in the graduate college statutes. Those statutes have normally been approved by the university senate members. The graduate council trustfully chooses examiners for students who have chosen the university candidacy submission, but must not leave the whole issue of assessment only for the examiners. The council usually takes part by affording discrete single sentences and questions in the form of an assessment sheet. These sheets, in the presenter of this paper's viewpoint, must represent, and have the same stipulations of the general statutes approved formally by the university for granting scientific degrees. They must inquire if a candidate is fulfilling all the aspects needed for a particular degree. The examiners work as experts is to report honestly if a candidate is really fulfilling the basic requirements of a particular degree by filling adequately the blanks in the assessment forms. The examiners may perhaps add in a separate sheet what they think is necessary. The examiners report must informatively and incisively pertain to the issue of university academic criteria. To safeguard awarding high degrees, the researcher thinks it is important for universities to adopt rigidly this strategy or this pattern of regularities; if a university does not apply such procedures, I think it merits reconsideration.

3.3. Conceptual Factors

The main hypothesis of the present paper is that most post-graduate candidates have ostensibly undergone similar steps in writing the introductory chapters of their researches and this has usually tended to result in similar findings. The researcher has arrived at the conclusion that the findings of the Fifteen English Language teaching studies are essentially the same and those studied samples had been randomly chosen and reviewed to test this hypothesis. The researcher has arrived at the conclusion that the fifteen studies findings are the same. This is because, the researcher thinks, that chapter one (introduction chapter) is not deeply tackled and the standard of reasoning adopted was very weak. Furthermore there are no links established or undergone between this chapters and the rest of the thesis. This section of the paper, however, compares what has actually happened, and what is supposed to happen. We have had accumulation of the same findings by different researchers, and we will ever have the same findings unless we develop an approach of training post graduate candidates about research methodology techniques. Data archives could be found easily if a consortium of research centers is established. Review institutional boards. The (RIB) should be founded to distribute on behalf of the candidate the questionnaires to the subjects/ respondents in order to guarantee the issue of seriousness. The RIB may require that certain modifications be made. Examples of some of the important remarks done by the university as independent body and which have been illustrated by Rubin Bobbie: (1993) are the following. You can refer to same source (ibid) to read more.

1. Certain additional information is given to subjects before obtaining their consent to participate.
2. You do more to assure subjects that a decision not to participate will not have any adverse consequences for them whosoever; for example, it will not hinder their future relations with the sponsoring organization.

4. Research problem

Bedazzle and Escalante (1992) claim that "most research develops as a combination of parallel and sequential stages". They also perceive problems as real life (environment space), and research (problem space). In the latter, space problems are being approached from a professional point of view in operational terms. They also link the defining of the problem with the selection of the appropriate strategy to be followed in the later chapters of the research. Defining, the problem space leads to researchable and well defined questions for the thesis. Salinger and Shohamy (1989) stated that the nature of the research problem will determine the organization of the all literature review. They think it will specify the rationale for the study (specific variables of the study). Coding process, collecting the data, analyzing the data, and explaining the results are issues that are largely dependent on the detection of the research problem and the selection of samples that have undergone sampling steps of logics. Methodology aims primarily at controlling what is called the extraneous variables. Defining the problem of the research may go alongside with what was previously mentioned. This is the main reason that leads the presenter of this paper to assume that many researchers conducted recently in some Sudanese universities in ELT had unrecognized variables, that may not be the focus of the research, but which nevertheless, interfered with the outcomes of these researches. This might also be considered as interpretation for the question why these studies have resulted in similar conclusion and recommendation. According to the definition mentioned earlier of the problem spaces we can attribute the problem of "similar findings" to conventional competence of the problem space. We can also enlarge the environment space to include the candidate's cultural background and pragmatic constraints. We also believe an environment space as such does add and enrich the research field if the other space of conventional competence is dealt with appropriately.

Perhaps, however, the above two spaces have not adequately been dealt with in the examples studied. And this problem of the same findings can be represented by the following figure.

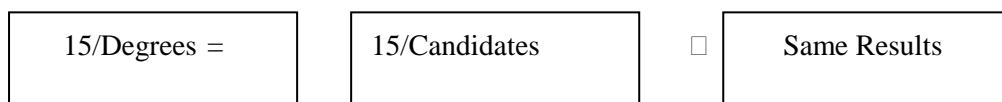
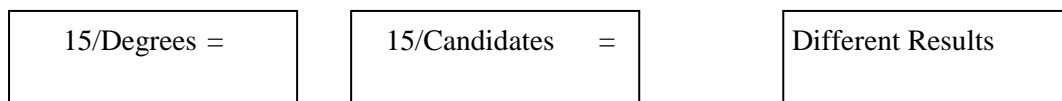


Figure illustrates the scientific degrees of some candidates versus the outcomes.

If the academic requirements had been fully considered, the above formula would have changed to its normal position which can be represented as follows:



So this problem of the same findings and recommendation will remain unsolved unless the nature of the problem is fully considered by the candidate himself and the supervisors of the work. This will help in the following inquiries:

- - What procedures and methodologies were used for collecting data?
- What are the underlying assumptions of the study are?
- How such studies add to the existing body of knowledge on the topic?

Defining the research problem, the writer of this paper thinks, does not only help in the renewal of researches findings, and therefore proves internal and external validity. But also helps in the creative thinking of choosing researches titles. Most ELT researches today that were undertaken in Sudanese Universities deal with the language four basic skills of language. Below are some models of titles which are taken from ELT Journal (1996) which proves that identifying the research problem helps in elaborating good studies and titles?

| The study | The authors |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| - An investigation of the structure of group activities in ELT course books | George M. Jacobs and Jessica Ball |
| - Content – based second language instruction at the tertiary level | Nancy Garfield – Vile |
| -Modeling oral presentations | Ronald Boyle |
| - Reader – response theory and ELT | Alan Havel |
| - Out – of – class language learning strategies | Nigel Pickard. |

Reading the titles above, you can not deny that they involve the four types of skills, but from a particular angle or from different pragmatic considerations and problematic aspects the above researchers had experienced. The above titles were inspired from environment space and were developed through conventional competence of the problem space.

5. Hypotheses of the Study

Hypotheses are defined by Rubin, Bobbie (1993) as specified expectations about empirical reality, derived from propositions. A proposition can easily be drawn from the logical interrelationships between axioms found in life. So social theories always describe the associations that might logically be expected to exist between particular attributes of different variables. This logical reasoning of attributes helps in the coding process, and this in turn will lead to correct interpretation and correct collection of the data through well – defined tables and diagrams. We can ultimately, however, state that the extent to which variables in a study can be regulated is called control (Brown: 1988). Theories of social studies, are always written in a variable language; and people get involve only as carriers of these variables (Rubin, Bobbie (ibid). All the scientific types of researches contain hypotheses. Researches ranged between historical researches which primarily aim at reconstructing the past in order to test a hypothesis related to it. Perry (loc cit) described qualitatively the events in the past through information obtained from different documentary sources. Tracing the developments of the events of culture and science, Perry as a historian was able to state a conclusion that indicates segregations of science from the liberal arts in post Civil War University. His theory is comprised of several types of statements such as axioms, and propositions. He used all types of English sentences to write his book of ' intellectual life in American '. Below are the axioms used in some clauses of the citation.

- Though the term two cultures was introduced by the British Scientist – novelist C. P. Snow only in 1959.
-that has astonished cotton Mather or Thomas Jefferson.

The historical fact can always be seen as an axiom, however, the rest of the texts can be considered as propositions about the logical interrelationship of these axioms. Thousand of propositions can be found in Perry's historical textbook and in every textbook of history. This means that thousand of quantitative studies must be undertaken rather than only qualitative one in order to convey a message, or write textbook concerning historical events. This also shows that qualitative approaches address the research problem from a more conceptual point of view. Imagine for example that you are testing all of Perry's propositions mentioned in his textbook quantitatively, how many studies you actually need in order to test all the Hypotheses? Here, you must remember the fact that any proposition can deliver a reasonable hypothesis. That is had Perry used the quantitative approach to write his book, he might have had a thousand hypotheses that needed to be logically administered. So the researcher opines that a good study should mutually consider both types of quantitative and qualitative strategies.

6. Conclusions

The main points that can be summarized from what has been discussed are the following:

- Problems hampering research in Sudan Universities consist of three different aspects. Administrative, statutory, and conceptual factors.
- The problems of researchers that are coming up with biased finding are considered as conceptual. Here, similar findings of different researches were considered as biased findings for the community because effort is exerted and money is expended and time is wasted for constantly similar findings.
- You can be given or you can purchase a copy of all the data you need from the relevant research centre of concern as an alternative of conducting the survey yourself. Research centers experts can delineate the way for you and curb the repetition of findings, because they will inform you of what has been done in this particular area of investigation , they provide you with syntheses of findings , methodologies adopted, evidence –based practices or scientific researches , and these of course will help you find your way of researching .
- To escape the fallacious situation of the 'similar finding', that we have reviewed in some ELT studies done in some Sudanese University one must identify and specify your major concepts and variables; one should also draw on information from authentic sources such as universities research centers and other academic bodies who help research process.

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