

## **Enhancing Intellectual Capacity of Nigerian University Graduates Through Students' Involvement in Decision-Making on Curriculum Matters.**

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**Abstract:** *This study investigated the perceptions of Principal Officers and Students' Union Executives on the involvement of students in decision-making on curriculum matters as a means of improving the intellectual capacity of the products of university education for overall goal achievement. The study was carried out in nine universities in the South Eastern States of Nigeria using a descriptive survey method. A researcher-made questionnaire was used for data collection from a population of 36 Principal Officers and 88 Students Union Executives. The data yielded a calculated chi-square value of 19.39 for Principal Officers and 11.47 for Students' Union Executives which were respectively higher and lower than the table value of 12.02 for 5 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Also, the frequency counts and percentages of pooled responses from the two groups are at variance with each other: The Principal Officers and Students' Union Executives disagreed with 94.1% and 11.1% respectively, they agreed with 5.9% and 88.1% in the same order. Both results confirm non participation of Students in decision-making on curriculum matters. A reversal of this situation (especially in curriculum processes) is recommended for the achievement of desired results.*

**Keywords:** *Students' involvement, decision-making, curriculum, intellectual capacity, goal achievement.*

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### **I Introduction**

In curriculum planning, the interest of the learner is given paramount consideration as it aims at meeting the social, intellectual, physical and integrative needs of the learner. (Afiangideh, 2009; Maduwesi, 2003; Onwuka, 1985) Since learners are considered to be active participants and recipients in curriculum implementation, it becomes imperative for them to be involved in some aspects of decision-making process on curriculum not only to facilitate a hitch-free implementation but also to train them in the skills of rational decision-making as future leaders.

In answering the question "who plans the curriculum?" Emeruwa in Onwuka (1985) succinctly listed all the stakeholders, namely, professionals, educational administrators, curriculum experts, subject specialists, teachers, lay citizens, parents and the learners themselves. He further stressed that even though they (learners) may not be involved in determining the broad areas or aspects of the curriculum, they contribute in a variety of ways to the effective planning and execution of curriculum in the classroom. Specifically, the learners work with the teachers to determine appropriate instructional objectives, decide on appropriate experiences, choose the instructional procedures that can best lead to the attainment of the objectives, help to collect ideal instructional materials, design and carry out relevant projects. To this extent, it becomes logical that students at tertiary level of education should be involved in decision-making relating to curriculum. It is right to assert therefore that without the co-operation of the learners curriculum implementation may not be realistic.

The central goal of university training is to produce graduates who can contribute effectively in public and private sectors of national economy (FRN, 2004). This translates to grooming the students in well articulated curriculum for the various programs in the universities. It is however, difficult for students who enroll for instance, in Agricultural programs, to understand why they may be required to take general courses in Physics, Mathematics, Statistics, General Studies, etc, if they are not carried along. Such complexities may lead to students' loss of interest and poor performance in such courses. Granted that students are in the university to learn new concepts and skills, their involvement in decision-making on curriculum matters, even in a limited form cannot be over emphasized. It cannot only promote better intellectual capacity through drilling them in the processes of quality decision-making but also make them develop positive attitudes towards their school administration (Okorie, 2012)

Decision-making is defined as a process of choosing from alternative courses of action (Ukeje, 1992, Nwachukwu, 2006). The process of good decision-making involves identification and diagnosis of a difficulty,

the reflective development of a plan to alleviate the difficulty, the initiation of the plan and the the appraisal of its success. In university institution, decisions on curriculum issues is the prerogative of university senate as moderated by the National University Commission (NUC). This paper contends that students, as major stakeholders, should be involved in decision-making as recent researches show otherwise especially in universities is South Eastern States of Nigeria (Okorie, 2012) Perhaps, their non-involvement could be as a result of some assumptions that students as trainees, are in transit, inexperienced and cannot contribute meaningfully to logical decisions relating to academic and curriculum matters. (Enoh et al, 1987; Kaye, 1970; Corson, 1975; Nwankwo, 1980.)

However, Obondoh (2000) notes that democratization in decision-making is important because university as advocates of democratic institution need to practice what they preach. It has been observed that when students and staff are involved in making-decisions about salient issues concerning their lives, they are likely to identify with outcomes of such processes, develop positive attitude towards college goals and objectives as well as have feelings of belongingness. Similarly, students' involvement in decision-making satisfies students need for recognition, self expression and self actualization. (Uyanga, 1989; Boon, 2005; Obondoh, 2000; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2008; Cole, 2005)

## II. Research Method

### Design of Study

The design of the study is a descriptive survey in which data collection involves a target population from nine universities. This design is considered appropriate because the events being studied have already taken place. That means students' involvement or non-involvement in decision-making in those institutions is an already existing situation.

### Area of Study

The study was carried out in nine universities in the South Eastern States of Nigeria comprising of Abia, Imo, Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi States.

### Population of Study

The population of study consists of all 138 Principal Officers and Students' Union Executives of the nine universities in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. This is made up of 49 Principal Officers and 89

**Table 1: Population of the Study**

S/No.	State	Federal Universities	No. of Principal Officers	No. of Student Union Executives	Total	State Universities	No. of Principal Officers	No. of Students' Union Executives.	Total
1.	Abia	Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike	5	9	14	Abia State University, Uturu	6	10	16
2.	Anambra	Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka	6	9	15	Anambra State University of Science and Technology Uli	5	10	15
3.	Ebonyi	-	-	-	-	Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	5	11	16
4.	Enugu	University of Nigeria Nsukka	6	9	15	Enugu State University of Technology, Enugu	5	10	15
5.	Imo	Federal University of Technology, Owerri	6	10	15	Imo State University, Owerri	5	11	16
Total	5	4	23	37	59	5	26	52	77

Source: Data collected from the Institutions

Total No. of Universities = 9

Total No. of Principal Officers = 49

Total No. of Students' Union Executives = 89

Overall Totals = 138

Students' Union Executives in both state and Federal Universities in South Eastern States of Nigeria. The distribution of the target population and Universities involved are shown in Table 1 above.

**Sample and Sampling Techniques**

A purposive sampling technique was used consisting of the entire 138 Principal Officers and Students' Union Executives of the Universities in the study area. The choice of using the entire population is informed by the population being relatively small.

**Instruments for Data Collection**

The instrument for data collection was a researcher-made questionnaire called students' participation in decision-making and goal achievement questionnaire (SPIDAQAQ) used for two groups of respondents-Principal Officers and Students' Union Executives. The questionnaire was divided into two sections A and B.

Section A focused on bio-data comprising of name of institution, proprietorship of the institution and status of the respondent. Section B focused on students' participation in decision-making with the participation in curriculum matters as a subset.

The response to the statements were a modified four-point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4 points, Agreed (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 Points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. All responses under strongly Agree and Agree were collated and taken as "Agree" while responses under Disagree and Strongly Disagree were collated and taken as "Disagree"

**Validation of the Instrument**

The face and content validity were determined by giving the questionnaire items to experts in measurements and evaluation. Their inputs were requested in checking the relevance, correctness and any ambiguity of items to ensure that the questionnaire items elicited the required responses. Their contributions were used to review and modify the questionnaire items, resulting in 8 items on students' participation in decision-making on curriculum matters.

**Reliability of Instrument**

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the validated items were subjected to a pilot test. This was done by administering the instrument on a total of 15 students' Union Executives and 6 Principal Officers of University of Oyo, Akwa Ibom State, as they were not part of the main study.

A test-retest method of two weeks interval was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire items over time. The scores from the two tests were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistic. This yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.64 which was considered adequate for the study.

**Administration of the Instrument**

The questionnaire for the Principal Officers were personally administered by the researchers while those of the Students' Union Executives were administered by 9 research assistants who were properly briefed on how it should be done. They also assisted in the retrieval. The administration and retrieval of the questionnaires were accomplished within one month with about 90% return rate.

**III. Results and Discussion**

The data presented on Tables 2a and 2b show the responses of the Principal Officers and Students' Union Executives regarding students' participation in decision-making on curriculum matters. 271 pooled responses from the Principal Officers, representing 94.1% agreed. On the part of the Students' Union Executives, 626 pooled responses representing 88.9% agreed while 78 pooled responses, representing 11.1% disagreed that students' involvement in decision-making on curriculum matters enhance goal achievement. This result is also displayed graphically in figure 1.

**Table 2: Perceptions of Principal Officers and Students' Union Executives on Students' Participation in Decision-making on Curriculum matters and Goal Achievement.**

Table 2a		Principal Officers					
S/N	Questionnaire Items	Agree		Disagree		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1	Students' participation in decision-making on the content of their curriculum program will facilitate goal achievement.	6	16.7	30	83.3	36	100
2	Students' involvement in making decisions regarding their course outlines will bring about goal achievement.	0	00	36	100	36	100
3	Students' participation in decision-making on the teaching periods for each course will enhance goal achievement.	0	00	26	100	36	100
4	Students' suggestions on their areas of need and interests during	1	2.8	35	97.2	36	100

	curriculum planning will bring about goal achievement.						0
5	Students' involvement in decision-making when planning strategies for evaluating instructional process will enhance goal achievement.	0	00	36	100	36	100
6	Students taking part in making decisions concerning the effectiveness of their students' industrial training program will contribute to goal achievement.	2	5.6	34	94.4	36	100
7	Students' participation in appraising the performance of individual lecturers during lectures will enhance goal achievement.	5	13.9	31	86.1	36	100
8	Students' involvement in decision-making concerning the sale of textbooks published by lecturers will contribute to goal achievement.	3	8.3	33	91.7	36	100
	<b>Total</b>	17	5.9	271	94.1	288	100

Table 2b Students' Union Executives							
S/N	Questionnaire Items	Agree		Disagree		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1	Students' participation in decision-making on the content of their curriculum program will facilitate goal achievement.	73	83	15	17	88	100
2	Students' involvement in making decisions regarding their course outlines will bring about goal achievement.	76	86.4	12	13.6	88	100
3	Students' participation in decision-making on the teaching periods for each course will enhance goal achievement.	82	93.2	6	6.8	88	100
4	Students' suggestions on their areas of need and interests during curriculum planning will bring about goal achievement.	85	96.6	3	3.4	88	100
5	Students' involvement in decision-making when planning strategies for evaluating instructional process will enhance goal achievement.	78	88.6	10	11.4	88	100
6	Students taking part in making decisions concerning the effectiveness of their students' industrial training program will contribute to goal achievement.	79	89.8	9	10.2	88	100
7	Students' participation in appraising the performance of individual lecturers during lectures will enhance goal achievement.	77	87.5	11	12.5	88	100
8	Students' involvement in decision-making concerning the sale of textbooks published by lecturers will contribute to goal achievement.	76	86.4	12	13.6	88	100
	<b>Total</b>	626	88.9	78	11.1	704	100

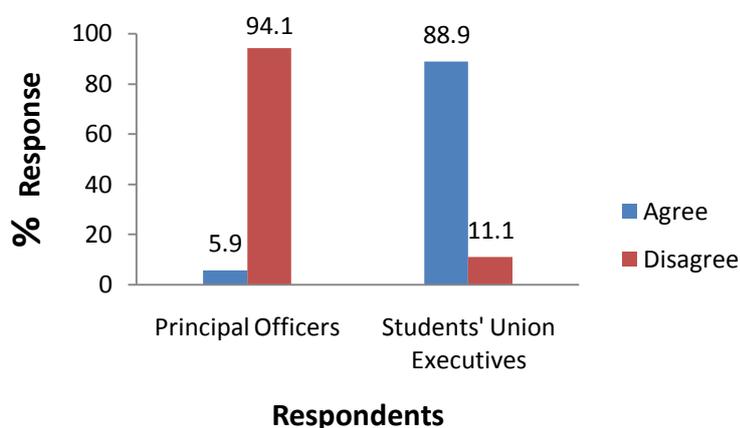


Fig 1: Perceptions of Principal Officers and Students' Union Executives on Students' Participation in Decision-Making on Curriculum Matters and Goal Achievement.

**Table 3: Chi-square Analysis of the Responses of Principal Officers and Students' Union Executives on Students' Participation in Decision-making on Curriculum Matters and Goal Achievement.**

Item	Agree	Disagree	Total
<b>Principal Officers</b>			
Students' participation in Decision-making on the content of their program	6 (2.13)	30 (33.88)	36
Course outline	0 (2.13)	36 (33.88)	36
Teaching periods of each course	0 (2.13)	36 (33.88)	36
Areas of their need during curriculum planning	1 (2.13)	35 (33.88)	36
Evaluating instructional process	0 (2.13)	36 (33.88)	36
The effectiveness of their IT program	2 (2.13)	34 (33.88)	36
Appraising the performance of lecturers	5 (2.13)	31 (33.88)	36
Sale of books produced by lecturers	3 (2.13)	33 (33.88)	36
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>288</b>
<b>Students' Union Executives</b>			
Students' participation in decision-making on content of their programs	73 (78.25)	15 (9.75)	88
Course outline	76 (78.25)	12 (9.75)	88
Teaching periods of each course	82 (78.25)	6 (9.75)	88
Areas of their need during curriculum planning	85 (78.25)	3 (9.75)	88
Evaluating instructional process	78 (78.25)	10 (9.75)	88
Effectiveness of their IT program	79 (78.25)	9 (9.75)	88
Appraising the performance of lecturers	77 (78.25)	11 (9.75)	88
Sale of books produced by lecturers	76 (78.25)	12 (9.75)	88
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>704</b>
Principal Officers	Students' Union Executives		
X <sup>2</sup> Cal = 19.39	Cal = 11.47		
X <sup>2</sup> critical = 12.02	X <sup>2</sup> critical = 12.02		
d.f = 7	d.f = 7		
α = 0.05	α = 0.05		

Based on Table 3 above, the chi-square calculated value of 19.39 for the Principal Officers is greater than the critical value of 12.02 at d.f of 7 and 0.05 level of significance. However, chi-square calculated value of 11.47 for the Students' Union Executives is less than the same critical value of 12.02, at the same level of significant and degree of freedom. In other words, there is a significant difference in the opinions of the Principal Officers and Students' Union Executives regarding Students Participation in decision-making on curriculum matters and goal achievement. While the Principal Officers perceived that students' involvement in decision-making on curriculum matters was not a factor in goal achievement, the students' Union Executives believed that their involvement enhanced goal achievement.

Non involvement of students in decision-making on curriculum matters by university administrators have been based on the assumption that students as immature trainees do not know what is best for them and so cannot contribute effectively to decisions regarding curriculum (Enoh, 1987; Nwankwo, 1980) the difference in the opinions of the two groups could be that of generational gap. The Principal Officers most probably were not part of the decision-making process during their students' years. The Students' Union Executives on their own part could have their leverage from modern concepts on students' rights. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2008), specified that students at each level of schooling should be involved in contributing to the decisions made about their own learning, the content of unit of work and about classroom management using school-based decision-making groups.

The researchers are of the opinion that while students may not be involved in decision-making on curriculum designs focused on specific academic skills, competencies and discipline, they could be involved in the curriculum-making processes whereby individuals needs and interests of students are sourced from the students themselves. This could also be realized through opinion pools before decisions are finally concluded. This is important because students are direct beneficiaries of the knowledge the school provides. The inclusion of students as partners in decision-making process will;

- Develop in them good attitudes towards their school authorities
- Develop in them democratic values like respect for each others' views and enable the students have clear understanding of the problems and prospects of their institution and so reduce unnecessary demands they make to their school authorities.
- Develop in them boldness, self recognition and actualization and

- Train them well in the art of good decision-making.

#### IV. Conclusion

The perceptions of Principal Officers and Students' Union Executives on students' involvement in decision-making on curriculum matters as a means of enhancing students' intellectual capacity have been successfully investigated and analyzed. The results show a discordant significant difference in the responses of the two groups of respondents.

The difference in the opinions of the Principal Officers and the Students' Union Executives on this issue could be harmonized when the Principal Officers set up a study group (which includes students) that will look into the needs and rights of students on issues relating to present and future economy, so as to generate curriculum content that will not only meet the needs and right of students but also give the students practical training on rational decision-making needed in life.

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