Understanding the Complexities of Educational Change Resistance amongst Academic Staffs

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Abstract

The resistance change in the educational system has been observed among school curriculum as a result of change of government. The research aimed to delve into the intricacies of resistance to educational change among primary school academic staffs. Qualitative approach design was adopted. Convenient sampling technique was used to select ten participants through utilizing an online survey interview method. The tool utilized for this investigation was the Educational Change Resistance Interview (ECRI). Thematic qualitative design was used to analyses the data collected. Analysis of the gathered data led to the identification of recurring themes. The findings underscored the nuanced and multifaceted nature of educational change, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive and context-specific comprehension of academic staffs' viewpoints, experiences, and the various influencing factors impacting their resistance or acceptance of change. Moreover, the study highlighted potential strategies to mitigate resistance to educational change, including aspects such as compensation, motivation, support and training, as well as effective communication and involvement strategies. In conclusion, this research offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with educational change in primary schools, laying the groundwork for future efforts to foster a culture of resilience, collaboration, and innovation within the educational sector.

Keywords: Academic Staffs, Educational Change, Resistance.

1. INTRODUCTION

The quest for improved learning outcomes, societal shifts, and technological advancements significantly shape the ongoing evolution of the education sector. At the core of this evolution lies educational transformation, involving modifications in the curriculum, teaching methods, assessment approaches, and administrative rules within the educational...
Despite the noble intention behind educational change - aiming to enhance educational standards, academic staffs, who are crucial stakeholders, often show resistance. The resistance to educational change comprises a complex set of elements, encapsulating academic staffs' attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and responses to alterations in the educational environment (Abdulkareem, 2021; Muraina et al., 2021).

Resistance to educational change among academic staff is a complex phenomenon influenced by a variety of factors. Organizational culture, for instance, plays a significant role in shaping attitudes towards change (Jones & Williams, 2019; Smith, 2021). Academic institutions often have deeply ingrained norms, traditions, and routines that may resist disruption, making it challenging staff to embrace new initiatives. Additionally, the perceived benefits and drawbacks of change can significantly impact resistance (Brown et al., 2020; R. Johnson, 2018). For example, academic staff may resist change if they perceive it as threatening their autonomy, workload, or professional identity. Conversely, they may be more receptive to change if they see potential benefits such as improved student outcomes or opportunities for professional growth (Garcia & Lee, 2017; Taylor, 2019). Furthermore, the level of support and training provided to academic staff during times of change can have a profound effect on their willingness to adapt (Roberts & Nguyen, 2020). Insufficient support or inadequate training can leave staff feeling ill-equipped to navigate new systems or methodologies, leading to heightened resistance (Adams & Wilson, 2018; Chen & Patel, 2016; Roberts & Nguyen, 2020). Conversely, comprehensive support and targeted training initiatives can empower staff to embrace change more readily by providing them with the necessary skills, resources, and confidence to succeed.

Resistance can manifest as passive disagreement, active objection, or even secretive undermining of suggested alterations. Based on empirical data, it is indicated that academic staffs' opposition to educational change can impede the effective execution of reforms, obstruct the attainment of intended educational goals, and generate conflicts within the educational framework (Ilic, 2021; Kamilu et al., 2022). Various factors that impact academic staffs' resistance to educational change are analyzed as contributors to this resistance. These factors can be categorized into three primary groups: individual, organizational, and contextual. The individual factors encompass the perspectives, attitudes, and experiences of academic staffs themselves. Previous research underscores the significance of academic staff’s self-efficacy, perceived proficiency, and personal beliefs in shaping resistant behaviours (Hall, G. E., & Hord, 2015). Organizational factors delve into the dynamics within educational institutions, including institutional workings, administrative backing, and leadership approaches.

Finally, contextual factors take into account the broader social, cultural, and economic environment in which educational change transpires, as these elements can significantly impact academic staffs' resistance (Halek et al., 2021; K. Johnson, 2015). In the Nigerian context, characterized by multiple reforms in the educational system, academic staffs have notably exhibited varying degrees of resistance to educational change (Ogunleye & Ojo, 2018; Ogunode & Ayeni, 2024b). Understanding the complexities of this resistance within this specific setting may not only influence practices and policies in Ilorin South but also in similar regions within Nigeria and beyond. The investigation into resistance to educational change among primary school academic staff in Ilorin South Local Government Area of Kwara State reveals the intricate and multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. Through a qualitative approach and thematic analysis of data gathered via the Educational Change Resistance Interview (ECRI) tool, several key findings have emerged (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Lasisi & Oreagba, 2024).
Amidst the evolving global educational landscape, driving educational change in Ilorin South Local Government Area (LGA), Kwara State, Nigeria stands as a pivotal endeavor. However, the recurring resistance from the teaching workforce poses a significant obstacle to the smooth implementation of these changes. This resistance, impacting the quality of education and the overall educational advancement in the region, emerges as a critical concern warranting further investigation. Academic staff’s resistance to educational change in Ilorin South LGA is a multifaceted issue rooted in various critical areas. Firstly, this resistance jeopardizes the efficacy of educational reforms aimed at enhancing student achievement and their educational journey. Secondly, resistance to educational change fosters conflicts within educational institutions. The impact of resistance to educational change extend far and wide. Consequently, these effects diminish the quality of education offered to students, jeopardizing their preparedness for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Previous studies on resistance to educational change in Nigeria and other nations have yielded valuable insights. Previous study discovered various factors contributing to resistance, including inadequate academic staffs’ preparation, lack of academic staffs’ involvement in policy-making, and discrepancies between reforms and academic staffs’ beliefs (Idris et al., 2023; Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). Other study opined that students are often faced with numerous challenges, which can bring on stress, anxiety, depression or relationship problems with those around them as a result of resistance change in education (Y. Suleiman et al., 2021). Other study submitted that sudden changes in educational settings can lead to persistent underperformance among secondary school students in Nigeria (Oladejo et al., 2022). There is also study that investigated the principals’ perception of guidance and counselling in secondary schools as a tool to cob the implications of the resistance changes made in secondary schools (Y. Suleiman et al., 2021).

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively understand and analyze the complexities of educational change resistance among academic staffs in Ilorin South Local Government Area (LGA), Kwara State, Nigeria. The study explored the personal, professional, and contextual factors that contribute to resistance to change, and the strategies that can be used to resist that change.

2. METHODS

The phenomenon of educational change resistance among academic staffs in primary schools in Ilorin South LGA, Kwara State, was investigated using a qualitative approach in this study. In order to give a thorough and comprehensive account of the causes, effects, and tactics of educational change resistance in the context of Ilorin South LGA, the study employed a descriptive case study design (Omair, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were the primary means of data collection used in this study. Voice notes were used by the respondents to submit their responses to the online interviews conducted over WhatsApp. Open-ended questions that matched the study’s objectives and research questions were used in the interviews. The purpose of the interview questions was to elicit the opinions, experiences, and perceptions of the respondents regarding resistance to educational change in their schools and within the education system as a whole. Ten primary school academic staffs in Kwara State's Ilorin South LGA were chosen for the study using a purposive sampling technique. The selection of the respondents was based on their suitability and representativeness for the research topic, as well as their availability and willingness to participate in the study. The respondents varied in age, gender, school, and years of experience as academic staffs.

In order to examine the information gathered from the interviews, the study conducted a thematic analysis. After the voice notes were converted to text, they were meaningfully
categorized and thematically coded. After the voice notes were converted to text, they were meaningfully categorized and thematically coded. After that, the themes were examined and debated in light of the study's goals and research questions as well as the body of current literature. The study adhered to ethical standards and best practices for qualitative research. Before consenting to participate, the respondents were made aware of the study's goals, methods, and purpose. They received guarantees that the information about them and their answers would remain anonymous and secret. Additionally, they were asked if it was okay to record and use their voice notes for reporting and data analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The qualitative results presented in the sections provide valuable insights into the perceptions of academic staff towards educational changes, factors contributing to resistance to change, and suggestions for enhancing the implementation of educational change in Ilorin South LGA.

Perceptions of Academic staff towards Educational Changes

From the responses to the question revealed that, majority of academic staffs perceive educational change as a new method or inventions that is introduced into the educational systems to make teaching more effective, while some see educational change as a dynamic process aimed to improve the quality of education and adapting it on students and society. For instance, a respondent gave us a detailed experience as an academic staffs and how educational change has exposed her to new ways of teaching with the aid of Artificial Intelligence (AI): When I was serving as an academic staffs, I discovered that, the teaching method we are taught in the university is different and not applicable to some schools. The school I've been working with now has opened my eyes to the modern way of teaching through artificial intelligence, teaching by example i.e. practical’s and projects as well as teaching by society i.e. field trip. This has changed my teaching practices and has made teaching easier for me. A respondent claimed that “In the area of ICT usage, a lot of people before now didn’t know how to use ICT gadgets and other technology tools to make teaching more effective”. Academic staffs should accept changes in education in this 21st century so as to get our educational sectors integrated.

The responses indicate that academic staffs generally perceive educational changes as innovative methods or interventions aimed at improving teaching effectiveness and adapting education to the needs of students and society. Notably, the incorporation of modern teaching techniques such as artificial intelligence (AI) and practical learning experiences like field trips is seen as beneficial in enhancing teaching practices. This reflects a positive attitude towards embracing technological advancements and pedagogical innovations to enhance the quality of education.

Factors Contributing to Educational Change Resistance

From the responses to the topic above, a respondent thinks that the major factor that causes resistance of academic staffs' educational change is the “mind”. The respondent even went further to tell us her experience in her place of work about the effect of an academic staffs having a fixed mindset; he/ she finds educational integration so difficult. “There is a school I've worked. Therein, we all used to submit the examination questions to the school typist but when they had a new principal, the man changed the customs of the school and some of the academic staffs found it difficult to adapt to this innovation and change. Another respondent ascertained that the major factors that contributed to the resistance in educational
change in Ilorin South are Incompetence of the academic staffs, Limited resources, Reluctance to experiment, Fear of failure and lack of adequate information. If an academic staff lacks experience, he/she develops low self-esteem which eventually has direct impact on students.

Some academic staffs are capable but as a result of limited resources, they find themselves being incapacitated. Inadequate information can also lead to academic staffs incompetence in a situation where by they do not have full knowledge of what is required and what to take to the class. More so, unavailability of instructional materials can also lead to setbacks. Another respondent believes that one of the factors that contribute to educational change in Ilorin South LGA is the state of the economy especially when it comes to salary and political changes i.e. changes in government. Others are, background of the academic staffs, Unwillingness to change, Lack of awareness, Unavailability of adequate training, Lack of finance, Fear of the unknown, Lack of training, Irregular training, Lack of communication between the school administrators and academic staffs. Several factors contributing to resistance to educational change among academic staff are identified, including mindset, incompetence, limited resources, fear of failure, and lack of information.

Addressing Factors to Enhance Implementation of Educational Change

From the responses, majority of the respondent said that the factors that can be effectively addressed to enhance the implementation of educational change in Ilorin South LGA are 1.) Implementation of remuneration strategies to curb delays and motivation of the academic staffs. 2.) Organization of training for the academic staffs prior to the implementation of the change. 3.) Academic staffs should be carried a long before enacting educational change. 4.) Provision of adequate training for the academic staffs. Open communication between academic staffs and schools administrators Trust and respect must between academic staffs and the school administrators. 5.) Policy makers and Government should organize adequate academic staffs training prior to the implementation of any educational changes so as to ease adoption of the innovations.

Respondents offer various suggestions for addressing factors hindering the implementation of educational change. These include the implementation of remuneration strategies to motivate academic staff, organization of training programs, open communication between staff and administrators, and providing adequate support and resources. Building trust and respect between staff and administrators, along with comprehensive training and sponsorship opportunities, are emphasized as crucial for facilitating the adoption of educational innovations.

Overall, these insights can inform policymakers, school administrators, and stakeholders in developing strategies to overcome resistance to change and promote a culture of continuous improvement in education. By addressing the identified factors and implementing the suggested interventions, Ilorin South LGA can enhance the implementation of educational changes and ultimately improve the quality of education for students.

Discussion

The qualitative findings highlight the complex nature of educational change and the diverse challenges faced by academic staff in adapting to new initiatives. It underscores the importance of addressing mindset barriers, providing adequate resources and support, and fostering a collaborative and communicative environment to facilitate successful implementation of educational changes (O’Leary et al., 2020; Van Dijk-Wesselius et al., 2020). Additionally, the role of training and professional development in equipping staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to embrace change cannot be overstated. The findings of this research revealed that academic staffs have diverse and complex perceptions of
educational change, ranging from seeing it as a novel approach or invention to a dynamic process that aims to improve the quality of education and adapt it to students and society. The paper also finds that academic staffs face various challenges and barriers in implementing educational change, such as lack of remuneration and motivation, insufficient training and resources, poor communication and involvement, and resistance from colleagues and students.

The paper identifies some factors that can enhance the implementation of educational change, such as remuneration and motivation, training and support, communication and involvement, and provision of adequate resources. Previous studies posited that quality education can be ascertain when the teaching staff are empowered and equipped with adequate equipment and materials (A. Suleiman & Abdulkareem, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2023). Other study laid emphasis on the usefulness of ICT in enhancing quality, reducing complexity, and equating academic staff resistance to quality delivery before, during, and after teaching and learning (Ehindero et al., 2023). Another study discovered various factors contributing to resistance changes (Idris et al., 2023). Understanding the complexities of this resistance within the specific setting may not only influence practices and policies in Ilorin South but also in similar regions within Nigeria and beyond (Ogunode & Ayeni, 2024a; Oladejo et al., 2022).

Beyond the confines of academia, this study's understanding of the complexity of academic staffs' resistance to educational change in Kwara State's Ilorin West Local Government Area (LGA) is significant. It offers insightful analysis and helpful suggestions for well-informed policy formation and decision-making, with practical implications for a range of education-related stakeholders. This study will help academic staffs in Ilorin South LGA because it will give them a better understanding of the obstacles they face and their own resistance to changes in education. Academic staffs can adjust to new curricula and teaching methodologies more proactively by being aware of these factors. Better student outcomes, increased job satisfaction, and professional growth can follow from this.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made: 1.) A bottom-up approach to educational reform that includes academic staffs in the planning, design, implementation, and assessment of change initiatives is something that policymakers, administrators, and educators should embrace. 2.) To help them embrace educational change, academic staffs should have access to sufficient funding, incentives, training, support, resources, communication, and involvement. 3.) The effects of educational reform on students' learning outcomes and academic staffs' professional development should be investigated further.

4. CONCLUSION

Educational change is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires a holistic and contextualized understanding of academic staffs’ perceptions, experiences, and factors that influence their resistance or acceptance. Academic staffs must be empowered and involved in the process of educational change as important stakeholders and change agents. This is because education reform is a collaborative and participatory endeavour. Resistance of educational change can be curbed by several elements, including; compensation and motivation, support and training, communication and involvement, and the availability of sufficient resources.

5. REFERENCES

Understanding the Complexities of Educational Change Resistance amongst Academic Staffs.


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