NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

A PUBLICATION OF

THE NIGERIAN ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHERS AND EVALUATORS

EVALUATION AND RESEARCH COMMUNICATION

By
Adams O. U. ONUKA, (Ph. D)
adamonuka@yahoo.com, ada.otuoze@gmail

&

Esther O. Durowoju
Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
durowojuesther@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study was undertaken to find out how effectively evaluation and research findings are disseminated to the various publics expected to consume them. Survey design was used in the investigation and random sampling technique was used to select 350 subjects from five sectors of the economy as well as twenty researchers from University of Ibadan and NISER, while a research and evaluation communication scale was used for data collection. The data were analysed using descriptive and correlation statistics. The results show that there was no significant relationship between the number of evaluation and researches conducted and their communication to users. It also shows that most researchers embark on research and evaluation for promotion purpose while the findings of those evaluation and research are disseminated through seminars, conferences and journals. Based on these, it was recommended that communication should be part of evaluation and research activities from the outset to the dissemination of findings, that there should be agency for dissemination of findings which could disseminate outcome through appropriate media to relevant publics, organisations and philanthropists should fund the dissemination of research findings and that researchers and evaluators should endeavour to publicize the findings of their works through workshops, conferences and book and/or journal publications as well as through both print and electronic media.

*Key Words:* **Evaluation, Research, Feedback and Dissemination**

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is an everyday phenomenon. It cuts across all areas of human endeavour and it is carried out by everybody either consciously or unconsciously. Evaluation involves giving value judgment about an entity which could be an individual, programme or event, based on sound analysis derivable from information on the object of evaluation. Basically, e**valuation** is a systematic determination of merit, worth, significance or importance of something or someone using predetermined criteria. Evaluation often is used to characterize and appraise subjects of interest in a wide range of human enterprises, including the arts, criminal justice, foundations and

non-profit organizations, government, health care, education, security, business organizations and other human services (Reeve and Peerbhoy, 2007). According to Leger and Walsworth-Bell in, Reeve and Peerbhoy (2007) evaluation as 'the critical assessment which is based on objectivity of the degree to which a service or its component parts fulfils stated goals'. This portends that one can objectively attain knowledge, and scientifically or quantitatively measure predetermined and external concepts.

Research represents logic of inquiry geared toward obtaining the truth about an event, project, place, individual or object. Research can be defined as a scientific ways of solving problems. Kerlinger in Hassan (1998) asserts that scientific research involves "systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena. From this definition, it can be inferred that research a systematically controlled investigation of an event, place, individual or object with the aim or intention of understanding or verifying knowledge that will help the researcher achieve his purpose. Also, the definition implies that every research study has a goal or purpose. Evaluation and research are synonymous in the sense that they employ systematic and empirical approach in solving problem. Evaluation and research involve systematic collection of data which are scientifically or quantitatively measured.

The steps involved in Evaluation and Research process are diagrammatically presented below:
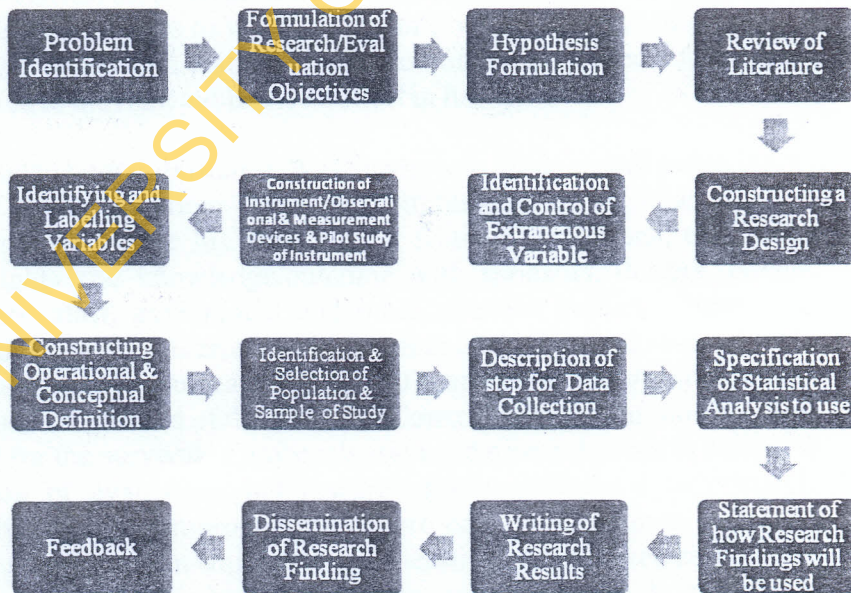
Evaluation and research involve systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about some object. All evaluation and research works involve collecting and sifting data in order provide basis for making valid inferences from the data.. The drive for conducting research and evaluation study differs from one researcher to another. Carl (2001) opines that most researchers or scientists work for recognition by other researchers or scientists while students carry out research to impress their professors, as postdoctoral fellows particularly embark on research work to impress not only their advisors but to get work published in journals that are controlled by scientists. He stressed further that researchers at universities conduct research studies to get grants, promotions and reputation as good scientists or researchers; and personal wealth is rarely the motivation for most researchers, whether in academia or industry in that clime.

The generic goal of most evaluation and research works is to provide useful feedback to a variety of audiences including sponsors, donors, client-groups, administrators, staff, government and other relevant constituencies. Hence, the main goal of dissemination is to share with others the knowledge that the evaluation or research has produced. It has been found the dissemination of key findings is a crucial step in the research process but that often times the results are not made available to study participants and others in the local community that could benefit from them (Onuka and Onabamiro, 2010). Feedback is useful if it aids in decision-making. There is broad consensus that the major goal of evaluation should be to influence decision-making or policy formulation through the provision of empirically-driven feedback (Onuka, 2010). CARE (2003) believes that researchers have an ethical obligation to ensure that research findings are disseminated to research participants as well as other individuals and institutions in the communities in which they work, who may want to utilise its outcome. It is pertinent to mention that any evaluation or research report that is not properly communicated to the right publics is an effort in futility.

Communication is vital to human existence. We learn how to think, to feel and to judge through the aid of communication. Through communication an evaluator or researcher can transmit and share his experiences, feelings, intentions, emotions, wisdom, ideas, thoughts and knowledge/outcome with sponsors, donors, client-groups, administrators, staff, government and other relevant publics (Durowoju, 2010). Basically, communication is an essential factor in evaluation and research; it is the life wire of evaluation and research activities. It influences evaluation and research activities from the outset to the end of the exercise. Consequently, communication as an indispensible tool for the survival of any evaluation and research work is essential for the dissemination of evaluation and research findings/outcome to research audiences or stakeholders for improvement of projects, programmes, policies, curriculum, educational instruction while they are operating or have been concluded, to draw out the value of what has been learnt/done, and/or to provide advice for funders and future projects. The results of the evaluation and research can also be

communicated to research consumers in order to identify ways of planning, improving, and modifying projects, programmes and policies as well as demonstrating accountability and project/programme effectiveness; and justifying funding. Myers and Barnes (2004) observe that evaluation and research evidence help to assess how a programme or project or study is doing, how far the stated objectives are being achieved and how much the programme had addressed the needs of its target audience. They also conclude that evaluation and research is not complete until the findings are reported. According to Barnes, Clouder, Pritchard, Hughes and Purkis (2003); and Walter, Nutley and Davies, (2003), dissemination of research findings which could be oral or written presentation usually happens at the end of a research project.

Myers and Barnes aver that no research is complete until the findings are reported. In same vein, CARE posits that for dissemination of research and evaluation to be most effective, dissemination strategies must be incorporated into the earliest planning stages of a research study. In fact, the most successful dissemination processes are typically designed prior to the start of a project. The basic reasons for disseminating evaluation and research according to Myers and Barnes are: for awareness, for understanding, and for action. They submit that the various means of disseminating research and evaluation findings include using the media, newsletters, static display boards, conferences, academic journals, specialist and professional press, briefings, performance and role play, children as guides, and videotapes. CARE states that strategies for dissemination of research and evaluation findings include media coverage (newspapers, magazines, radio, television as well as websites), press release, flyers, posters, brochures, or research briefs. Creating flyers, posters, brochures, or research briefs about research projects and findings offer a concise and visually-appealing way to disseminate information to broad audiences. Furthermore, *Lutkamu, Shetto, Mahoo*, and *Hatibu* (undated) found that the mechanisms and media used to disseminate or promote research findings included publication in local and international journals, stakeholders' meetings, farmers' training, extension messages and mass media. Their findings also revealed that the commonly-used communication media in the dissemination of research results included leaflets and pamphlets, posters, agricultural shows, farmer exchange visits, field days, video shows, demonstrations, technical reports, newsletters, publications, radio and the internet.

One of the problems confronting past and current research, evaluation and development efforts is failure to effectively communicate findings to various stakeholders (Garforth, 1998; Ashby, 2003). URT (2002) states categorically that research findings are not adequately disseminated to end-users. Still, MAFS (2003) found that the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy, the Agricultural Sector Development Programme and the recent Medium Term Plan (MTP) for Research and Development programme of Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in Tanzania encountered the problem of poor communication of research results.

It is, however, acknowledged that in order to attain equitable, efficient and sustainable research and evaluation findings in this country and internationally, dissemination of research findings should be based, among other things, on improved communication. Improvement in the dissemination and utilization of research findings in all sectors could be achieved through the strengthening of the information, education and communications system, and monitoring and evaluation involving all stakeholders.

In view of the foregoing, it became imperative to find out what motivate researchers to embark on research work or study and how effectively evaluation and research findings are disseminated to the various publics expected to consume them.

Research Questions

1.   What are the perceived motivators of undertaking research/evaluation in Nigeria?

2.   What are the perceived means of dissemination of research/evaluation findings?

3.   How do stakeholders perceive dissemination of research/evaluation findings?

Hypothesis

1.   There is no significant relationship between the level of research/evaluation conducted and the level of their dissemination.

METHOD

A survey research procedure was employed in the study. Data were, therefore collected ex-post facto because their manifestations have already occurred and manipulation of variables was involved. The target population comprised potential consumers of research and evaluation from five sectors of the economy viz: Agriculture including fisheries and poultry), education, financial institutions (insurance and banking), manufacturing and commercial sectors. Twenty researchers were selected purposively from UI (15) and NISER (5) in order to cover the aforementioned sectors. The instruments used in this study are Evaluation and Research Communication Scale (ERCS) and Stakeholders Perception of Evaluation and Research Communication Scale (SPERCS).

The Evaluation and Research Communication Scale developed and validated by the researchers was used for data collection on research and evaluation communication. The instrument consisted of two parts. Part A was made up of introduction and bio-data while Part B consisted of twenty-three. The instrument was originally made up of thirty-five (35) items to which the respondents were required to indicate the degree of their agreement and these were then reduced to twenty-three items as a result of the validation exercise. The initial scale was administered on 30 students who did not participate in the main study. The reliability was computed using Cronbach Alpha

statistic yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.74 and through factor analysis, the validity level was shown to be 0.80.

The second instrument: 'Stakeholders' Perception of Evaluation and Research Communication Scale' was also developed and validated by the researchers in the same way the above was validated with reliability coefficient of 0.80 and construct validity coefficient of 0.74 respectively. It consisted of Part A which was meant to capture information about the respondents and Part B which originally consisted of twenty-five items and was reduced to twelve items after the validation exercise. The items of the two instruments were scored as follows: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1

The above named instruments were employed to collect data in the research centres chosen for the study. The Evaluation and Research Communication Scale was administered on the researchers and research/evaluation consumers respectively while the Stakeholders' Perception of Evaluation and Research Communication Scale was administered on the research and evaluation stakeholders from the five aforementioned sectors. Data were scored and the resulting data were then collated and analyzed. Descriptive and correlation statistics were used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

Perceived motivators for undertaking research/evaluation in Nigeria

The figure below shows the perceived motivating factors for researching and evaluating in Nigeria.
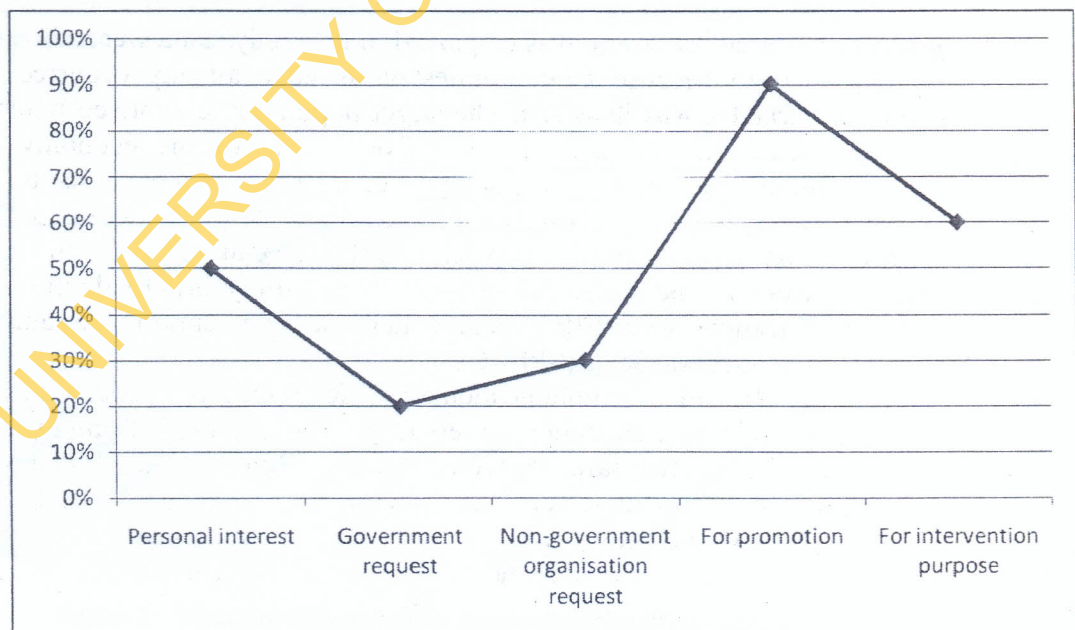

Figure 1: The Perceived Motivating Factors for undertaking Research/evaluation

From the result in the chart presented above, 50% of the researchers/evaluation claimed that they embark on research study based on personal interest while 20% of the researchers submitted that they carry out research/evaluation study based on government request. Again the 30% of the researchers/evaluators conducting research/evaluation work based on non-governmental requests. 90% of the researchers/evaluation claimed that promotion is the motivating factor for undertaking research while 60% of them indicated that they conduct research/evaluation for intervention purpose. From the result it is evident that promotion is the key motivating factor for conducting research/evaluation and evaluation by most of the researchers. This findings is in agreement with the assertion of Carl (2001) that most researchers or scientists work for recognition by other researchers/evaluators or scientists while students carry out research /evaluation to impress their professors especially postdoctoral fellows embark on research/evaluation work to impress not only our advisors but to get work published in journals that are controlled by scientists. He stressed that researchers/evaluation at universities/research institutes conduct research/evaluation studies to get grants, promotions and reputation as good scientists or researchers; and personal wealth is rarely the motivation for most researchers/evaluators, whether in academia or industry. He further claimed that scientists who want personal wealth generally form their own companies but even these people tend to be idealistic and very few scientists have actually been successful in business. A majority have chosen research study because they want to solve scientific problems while some do it because they like to teach. A few may do it for ego or have power.

The perceived means of disseminating research/evaluation findings in Nigeria

The figure below illustrates the means by which findings of research and evaluation are disseminated in Nigeria.
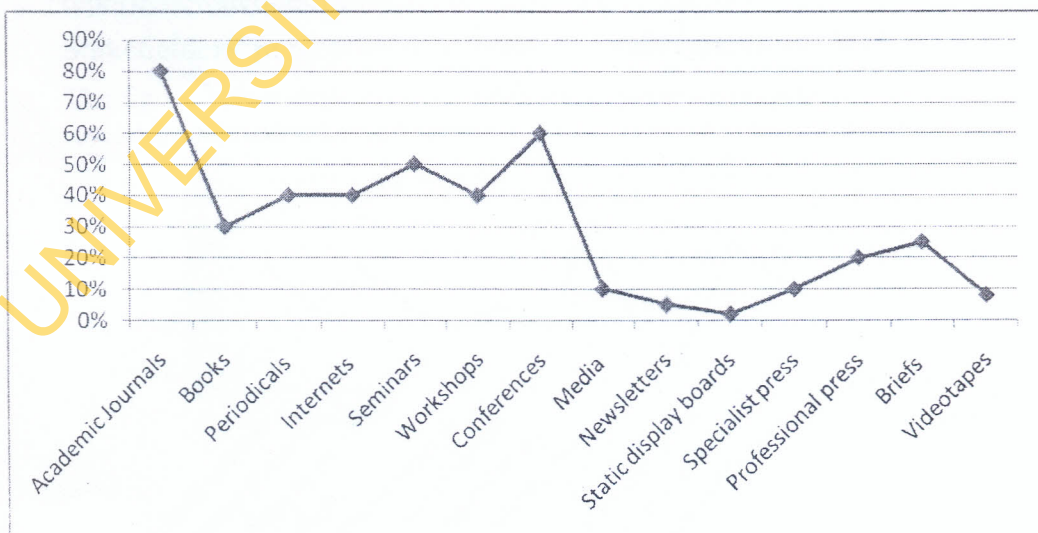

Figure 2: Means of Dissemination Research/Evaluation Findings

The above result revealed the various means that researchers employed to disseminate their research and evaluation findings. 80% of the researchers disseminate their research and evaluation in academic journals, 30% of them disseminate their findings in books, 40% used periodicals and internets respectively. 50% of the researchers indicated that they publish their findings in seminars and 40% in workshops. 60% of the researchers publish their findings in conferences, 10% in media, 12% in newsletters and 2% in static display boards. Further, 10% of the researchers signified that they disseminate their research findings in specialist press, 20% in professional press, and 25% in briefs while 8% publish in videotapes. This implies that most research and evaluation findings are disseminated through academic journals, conference, seminars, while static display boards, media and newsletters are rarely used by researchers to disseminate research and evaluation findings.

These findings corroborate that of Myers and Barnes (2004); CARE (2003) who averred that no research is complete until the findings is reported. They summit that the various means of disseminating research and evaluation findings including using the media, newsletters, static display boards, conferences, academic journals, specialist and professional press, briefings, flyers, posters, performance and role play, children as guides, research briefs and videotapes. In the same vein, *Lutkamu, Shetto, Mahoo*, and *Hatibu (undated) found* that the mechanisms and media used to disseminate or promote research findings included publication in local and international journals, stakeholder meetings, farmers training, extension messages and mass media and that the commonly-used communication media in the dissemination of research results included leaflets and pamphlets, posters, agricultural shows, farmer exchange visits, field days, video shows, demonstrations, technical reports, newsletters, publications, radio and the internet.

Stakeholders' perception of dissemination of research/evaluation findings

The figure below depicts how stakeholders perceive dissemination of the findings of research and evaluation in Nigeria.
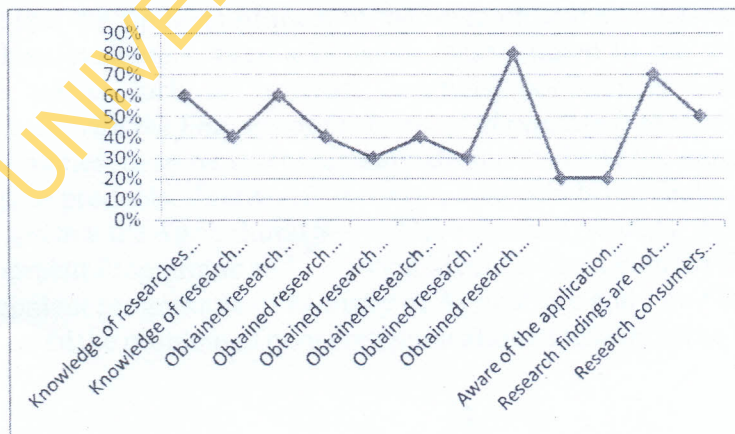

Figure 3: Stakeholders' Perception of Dissemination of Research/Evaluation Findings

The above result revealed 60% of the stakeholders signified that they have adequate knowledge of researches being carried out, 40% also stated that they have knowledge of research findings, 60% of them indicated that they obtained research findings through journals and 40% through seminar while 30% received through workshops. 40% of the stakeholders claimed that they receive research and evaluation findings through conferences, 30% through books and 80% through internets. 20% of the stakeholders obtained research and evaluation findings through periodical while 20% are aware of the application of research findings. In conclusion, 70% of them agreed that research findings are not being disseminated to the right consumers while 50% claimed that research and evaluation findings are not being utilized. Majority of the stakeholders attested that research findings are not being disseminated to the right consumers and this corroborated the assertion of Garforth, (1998); Ashby, 2003 that one of the problems facing past and current research, evaluation and development is failure to effectively communicate findings to various stakeholders. URT (2002) states categorically that research findings are not adequately disseminated to end-users.

Table 4: Relationship Between the Number of Research Conducted and Number of Findings Disseminated.

	No	Correlation Coefficient (Spearman rho)	Sig.
No of Research conducted	20		.000
No of Research Findings Disseminated	20	.880	

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

From the above result, there is significant relationship between the number of research conducted and the number of research carried out by the researchers. This implies that the findings of most of the research and evaluations conducted by the researchers/evaluators were adequately disseminated to the stakeholders through various means such as seminars, journals, conferences and workshops. *In consonance with the findings of Lutkamu, et al (undated) that most* researchers from the universities, to some extent disseminate and evaluate the impact of their research findings or products. *This result, however,* contradicts the findings of MAFS (2003) who found that the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy, the Agricultural Sector Development Programme and the recent Medium Term Plan (MTP) for Research and Development programme of Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in Tanzania encountered the problem of poor communication of research results. In the same vein,

Lutkamu, et al (undated) found that on the average, researchers spent more time on fieldwork, demonstrations, data analysis and report writing than on the preparation for knowledge sharing *or dissemination of findings to the end users.*

Conclusion

This study revealed that there are many reasons why researchers embark on research/evaluation works but promotion is the key motivating factor for conducting research and evaluation. Also, most research and evaluation findings are disseminated through academic journals, conference, seminars, periodicals and internets, but media and newsletters are rarely used by researchers to disseminate research and evaluation findings. In addition, majority of the stakeholders attested that research findings are not being disseminated to the right consumers.

Finally, it was evident that there is significant relationship between the number of research conducted and the number of research carried out by the researchers.

The implication of the study would mean that all researchers identify the various stakeholders that would be beneficiaries of their research findings. Also, they should network with all other researchers to identify various ways of disseminating research findings to the various stakeholders. Researchers should also be humble enough to learn communication skills.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:-

- Dissemination plan of Research and evaluation should be built into research and evaluation design right from the onset.
- A body to be responsible for harnessing research/evaluation outcomes and thereafter disseminate them to the appropriate stakeholders/consumers should be established.
- The research/evaluation outcomes consumers/stakeholders should be identified from the beginning of the research and evaluation planning and be incorporated into the exercise so they can always make their input into the process as well as be constantly communicated throughout the duration of the exercise and finally be fed with the outcomes.
- Capacity development for researchers/evaluators in outcome communication skills should be constantly employed to bring researchers/evaluators so they can be properly equipped for the task of research/evaluation communication.
- Policies and strategies guiding dissemination of research and evaluation findings should be made available to all stakeholders, while users should be informed of their roles in the implementation of policies and strategies. Research/evaluation reports should not be archived at national level; to allow users to easily access them through relevant institutions like

research institutes' libraries and government websites.

- Research projects should include communication strategies to ensure that research findings are well communicated to the targeted stakeholders in order to influence decision-making and resource allocation, to enhance utilisation of improved technologies.

REFERENCES

Ashby, J. (2003). Uniting Science and Participation in the Process of Innovation Research for Development. *Managing Natural Resources for Sustainable Livelihoods: Uniting Science and Participation* (edited by Pound, B; Snapp, S; McDougall, C. and A. Braun). Earthscan Publications Ltd., London and IDRC, Canada, 1-25.

Barnes, V., Clouder, D., Pritchard, J., Hughes, C., & Purkis, J. (2003). Deconstructing Dissemination: Dissemination as Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 3 (2), 147-164.

Carl, R. (2001). **What Motivates Scientists and Clinicians?** Retrieved from http://carecure.org/forum/showthread.php on 5th July, 2011

Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (2003). Strategies for Disseminating Research Findings. Retrieved from http://www.researchtoolkit.org/primer/docs/ on 1st July, 2011

Durowoju, E. O. (2010). Communication in Management. In Onuka, A (ed) Some Fundamentals of Management in Distance Learning. Ibadan: University of Ibadan, Distance Learning Centre.

Garforth, C. (1998). Dissemination Pathways for Renewable Natural Resources (RNR)
Research. Socio-economic Methodologies for Natural Resources Research: Best Practices Guidelines. Natural Resources Institute (NRI), Chantam, UK.

Hassan, T. (1999). Understanding Research in Education. Merrifield Publishing Company, Ogba Ikeja, Lagos.

Lutkamu, M., Shetto, M. C., Mahoo, H., & Hatibu, N. (undated). Scaling-up and Uptake Promotion of Research Findings on Natural Resources Management in Tanzania. Retrieved from http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/research_impacts/Research_ on 3rd July 2011

Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2003). Medium Term Plan for Agricultural Research in Tanzania. Retrieved from http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/research_impacts/Research on 3rd July 2011

Myers, P., & Barnes, J. (2004). Sharing Evaluation Findings: Disseminating the Evidence. Sharing Evaluation Findings NESS December 2004

Onuka, A. (2010). Evaluation, Continuous Assessment and Feedback Mechanism in Distance Learning in Onuka, Adams (ed) Some Aspects of Management in Distance Learning. Ibadan: DLC UI

Onuka, A.O.U., & Onabamiro, A.T. (2010). Challenges of and Possible Solutions to Conducting Educational Research and Evaluation in Nigeria. A Paper presented at the 4th Annual Conference of the West African Research and Innovation Management Association held at the Conference Monrovia, Liberia, 29 November to 3 December, 2010.

Reeve, J., & Peerbhoy, D. (2007). Evaluating the evaluation: Understanding the utility and limitations of evaluation as a tool for organizational learning. *Health Education Journal.* 66(2). 120-131.

Walter, I., Nutley, S., & Davies, H. (2003). Research impact: A cross-sector review [online]. St Andrews: University of St. Andrews, http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/%7Eruru/ ,Date of access: June 19, 2011].

United Republic of Tanzania (2002). Agricultural Sector Development Programme (ASDP).Retrieved from http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/mpacts/Research_on 3rd July 2011