

Full Length Research

An Evaluative Study of Scholarly Publishing In Nigerian Universities: Case Study of University Of Ibadan

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Publishing is an integral part of academic life in Universities across the globe. Beyond providing basis for assessment, it is also a platform to impart knowledge to upcoming generations. This study gave an overview of publishing and educational development in Nigeria. It identified the characteristics of academic publishing using University of Ibadan, being the oldest University in Nigeria as its case study. The study further articulated the roles of university press in academic planning and the effects of ICTs on academic publishing in University of Ibadan. Finally, this study enumerated problems confronting academic publishing in the University of Ibadan.

Keywords: Publishing, ICT, University Press

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INTRODUCTION

Scholarly publications are outcome of research and are important channels for dissemination of research findings by researchers to users. Being the life line of any academic setting, scholarly publishing is mostly associated with scholars that teach and/or conduct research in institutions of higher learning and other institutions of research (Ondari-Okemwa, 2011). It has been defined as the business of producing books and magazines (Longman (2015). Publishing is so important towards educational development of any given society be it developed or developing and at every level of educational pursuit.

However, the largest reservoirs of intellectuals are in the universities; and writing is the basis for the survival of these scholars who through their works can determine how far they can go in their academic life. Simply put, they must 'publish or perish!' This is because publication is one of the major criteria for promotion exercise amongst academicians. They are expected to produce

authentic and original research works that will advance knowledge in their chosen field of specialization. Peer-reviewed scholarly and professional journals are one of the very few internationally comparative sources of information on scientific outputs (Tijssen (2007). It plays an important role by providing a key linkage between knowledge production and use.

However, because of their specialized and limited readership, marketing of academic publications are some what restricted unlike the primary and secondary school textbooks with greater market in Nigeria. Primary and secondary schools are often recommended by the State Ministry of Education and as such assume state-wide patronage while the use of tertiary-level books usually depends upon the idiosyncratic recommendations of the lecturers who may not even be able to enforce the use of the materials on his students (Ike, 2004, Brian Wafawarowa (2007

In the Sub-Saharan Africa, scholarly publishing is at its

infancy stage when compared to other regions in both developed and developing nations (Hassan, 2001). Similarly, Africa's dependence on publishing is mainly reliant on the state, World Bank and donor agencies to shoulder financial responsibilities associated with such production (Brian Wafawarowa (2007).

The challenges confronting publishing in Africa are multifarious. Some of these challenges captured by Brian Wafawarowa (2007) include:

- too much dependence on the state, the world bank and donor funding. However, the support available from these institutions are only temporary and seasonal;
- limitation of the creativity of authors and publishers due to the specificity of curricula.;
- lack of free flow of books between geographical and cultural boundaries due to the idiosyncrasies of curricula.
- works published do not enhance lifelong habits of reading due to the instructional and institutional nature of their content.
- Lack of significant contribution to the development of the book industry as a sustainable commercial and cultural sector differences in dialect and strict curriculum requirements

This ineptitude pervades in many areas of body of knowledge. One of such disciplines is Science which is faced with inadequate scholarly publications when compared with other nations (World Bank, 2005). The establishment of the University College Ibadan, Nigeria's first University in 1948 then as an affiliate of the University College London (but now referred to as the University of Ibadan) signaled the commencement of academic research and publishing in the country (Mohammed A, 2008). The University began with a University press saddled with the responsibility of publishing research output of its academic staff. Latter on, some other institutions started to follow the exemplary role of the University of Ibadan in establishing their printing capacities.

To this end, while there had been a great leap in the output of research publications in the country in the coming years with distribution network even beyond the shores of the nation, from the 1970s there became a sharp decline in the output of publications due to the general decline in the standards and funding of education consequently forcing many academics in Nigerian to seek greener pastures in western nations.

Ike, (2004) while lamenting on the rate of the decline sadly noted:

'An estimated 90% of the annual output of books published in Nigeria is in the area of textbooks for primary and secondary education. This results in lopsidedness in favour of primary and secondary school texts and against tertiary education (including polytechnics, colleges of education, and universities). It also militates against the availability of professional books, reference books and general books (including creative writing, general interest books, and books for lifelong education)'

Similarly, the legal atmosphere seems to be unfriendly for publishing to thrive in Nigeria. For example, the delay in the full implementation of 34 years Federal Government-National Book Policy has been a cog in the wheel of progress in the publishing industry (Oluwadahun, 2014).

As noted by **Okezie, A (2014)**

'The book policy was also designed to support and encourage investigation and research into book development, ensure the production of books in specialized areas (e.g. Braille for the visually impaired), support the establishment and growth of libraries at all levels of the educational system etc.'

Although already approved by the National Council on Education (NCE) at its extra ordinary meeting in March 2007. The Federal Ministry of Education which is the nation's major ministry in charge of coordinating education matters in Nigeria is yet to grant it approval of the policy (Okojie, 2014). This is disturbing considering the fact that since 2007 when the policy was presented to the Federal Ministry of Education, there had been change of government with several education Ministers.

However, despite this shortfall, Nigerian academics are still writing and well published particularly in other climes with friendly publishing facilities. This has become more enhanced today as the global trend for publication is primarily electronically- driven and submissions can be made just with the use of email. Similarly, focus is gradually changing from having a gigantic printing press with heavy machinery to a virtual system where time and space are saved and publishing is done just at the click of the buttons.

According to Wikipedia(2015), although electronic publishing is similar to traditional publishing process only that it does not make use of offset printing press to print the final product and does not engage in the physical routine of distribution of books like the traditional style of publishing.

To be globally visible, local publishers like the university press must make conscious efforts towards developing their ICT skills and capacities so that they can

catch up with the intense competition within the system (Bankole, 2000) particularly from their counterparts in developed economies. Efforts must equally be made to combat the possibility of ICT-driven piracy which Okwilagwe (2001) observed was a major factor in the dearth of scholarly publication of books in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Book publishing has become, in recent years, one of the building blocks of modern educational system and more recently driven electronically. At present, Nigeria system of education places more reliance on modern textbooks as effective tools for successful implementation of her national educational policies. This of course also includes publishing for tertiary level of education otherwise known as scholarly publishing. This research is therefore taking a critical look at some factors which are indirectly involved in the advancement of scholarly publishing, its role on educational development and effect of ICTs on academic publishing especially in university of Ibadan.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of this study is to evaluate scholarly publishing in Nigerian universities with a central focus on university of Ibadan. This study is to be carried out in the university of Ibadan community. Specific objectives are to:

1. have an overview of publishing and educational development in Nigeria,
2. find out the characteristics of academic publishing in university of Ibadan,
3. examine the role of university press in academic planning,
4. determine the effects of ICTs on academic publishing in university of Ibadan, and
5. investigate the problem of academic publishing in university of Ibadan.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in that it will help to determine the perception of authors and publishers on scholarly publishing in Nigeria. It could also help to ascertain the characteristics of academic planning in Nigeria. This is with a view to help make appropriate measures needed to make progress in advancing the nation's scholarly publishing to meet the international standard. In addition, it should help to determine other obstacles that may be responsible for the failure of publishing standard academic and research materials for universities and

colleges in Nigeria. This will give an insight for intending investors in the publishing sector particularly, publicly-owned academic institutions willing to increase their internally generated revenue (IGR).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the use of survey research design primarily because of its suitability and efficient way of studying large populations while also allowing a sample population to be used to represent the entire population. The target populations for this study are the academic scholars of the University of Ibadan which as at 2006 numbered 1,330 academic staff (University Calendar, 2006).

The sampling method adopted for the purpose of this study is a simple random sampling technique using a two-part questionnaires latter analysed with the use of descriptive statistics of tables and percentages to show the respondents' response rate and their responses to questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Information of the Respondents

The respondents were from twelve different Departments in three Faculties in the University of Ibadan. 39.4% were males while the remaining 60.6% were females showing disparity in the gender distribution of the teaching faculty. Similarly 16(17.0%) of the respondents were Masters degree holders and 78(83.0%) had bagged their Doctorate degrees, this is in conformity with the directive of the National Universities Commission that teaching faculty of Universities in Nigeria should be mainly PhD holders. 4(4.3%) of the respondents were within the age range of 26 and 30 years old, 10(10.6%) within 31 and 35 years of age, 22(23.4%) aged 36 to 40 year while 58(61.7%) were over 40 years of age. Furthermore, 80(85.1%) respondents were married, while 14(14.9%) of the respondents were single.

Research Question 1: Are there changes in academic publishing over the years? If yes, how is scholarly publishing changing?

The findings from the respondents revealed that 80(85.1%) of the respondents agreed that scholarly publishing in Nigeria is very developed when compared with publishing firms in other climes. Also, only 65(69.2%) respondents agreed that scholarship works in Nigeria were not well produced while 20(21.3%) respondents were undecided and 9(9.5%) disagreed with this view. A large percentage of the respondents 54(57.4%) strongly

agreed that Nigerian scholars are not always encouraged while just 29(30.9%) were undecided. Finally, 51(54.2%) agreed that scholarly publishing is better promoted while 25(26.6%) were undecided.

From the above result, it could be inferred that scholarly publishing in Nigeria is now developed compared to the last few years. The result also revealed that academic publishing is better managed and produced than it was before, scholars are now being encouraged and scholarship work is better promoted.

Research Question 2: What are the impacts of the indigenous university press in the development and dissemination of scholarly work?

Most of the respondents believed that the university press performs some significant roles in the dissemination of scholarly results. About 86(91.5%) of the respondents agreed that the university press provides publishing avenues for the staff of the university. Also, 82(87.2%) of the respondents agreed that the university press plays the role of promotion and dissemination of quality research. Moreover, 76(62.7%) of the respondents agreed that the university press performs the role of compilation of readers and licensed books to the entire university community while 58(61.8%) of the respondents agreed that the university press publishes affordable books for students. Not less than 62(66.0%) of the respondents agreed that the university press markets the university to the outside world while only 71(75.5%) agreed that the university press helps in reviving the level of scholarly publishing in Nigeria. Lastly, majority 64(68.1%) of the respondents agreed that the university press helps in the reduction of over-reliance on foreign publishers.

It is very clear from this result that the university press plays a significant role in the promotion of scholarly publishing in Nigeria such as provision of publishing avenues for the staff of the university, promotion and dissemination of quality research, and publishing affordable books for students. Others were marketing the university to the outside world and reduction of over-reliance on foreign publishers.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges facing scholarly publishing in Nigerian universities in the future?

Scholarly publication just like the education sector in general has many challenges. About 82(87.2%) respondents held the view that scholarly publishing lacks the necessary support from the university community. The challenges of inadequate funding, piracy/ plagiarism of scholarly results and high tariffs on paper and other factors of production were all rated very high with 88(93.6%) response rate respectively. Moreover, low

patronage of scholarly results, inadequate distribution channels of scholarly results, as well as some scholarly results which are often below standard were all rated high with 80(85.1%) each. However, 62(66.0%) of the respondents also agreed that the scholarly publishing is faced with low production standard. Meanwhile, other problems indicated by the respondents included lack of infrastructure to promote research such as laboratory equipment, electricity, water, maintenance culture as well as conducive work environment.

The above result revealed that the scholarly publishing in Nigeria is facing a lot of challenges such as inadequate funding, low production standard, lack of support from the university community, low patronage and inadequate distribution channels of scholarly results. Others were piracy/ plagiarism of scholarly results, high tariffs on paper and other factors of production and also low standard of some scholarly results. These may however lead to discouragement of the scholars who are making frantic efforts to contribute to the body of knowledge, as well as low portrayal of the Nigerian scholarship in the international scene.

Research Question 4: What are the roles of modern technologies in the dissemination of scholarly information in Nigerian universities?

Almost all the respondents agreed that the modern information technologies have great impacts on the dissemination of scholarly information. 88(98.7%) respondents agreed that the new technologies enhance the timely reviews of research work while 77(77.7%) respondents also agreed that new technologies brought about the speedy publishing of research results while 73(77.6%) of the respondents agreed that the new technologies enhance the speedy dissemination of scholarly works. Moreover, 73(77.6%) of the respondents agreed that the new technologies provide links to other texts cited in a publication, while 82(87.2%) respondents agreed that new technologies brought about lower cost of production compared to the print version. Only 79(84.1%) of the respondents agreed that the new technologies reduces the problem of marketing and distribution of scholarly works.

The above result implies that the impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) on scholarly publishing is too great to be ignored and as such more of these modern facilities should be deployed into our publishing industry in order to gain more of the benefits that are accrued to it.

Research Question 5: What the problems currently facing scholarly publishing and how can they be resolved?

89(94.6%) respondents saw inadequate funding; poor

marketing and distribution; lack of basic infrastructures and heavy cuts in library budgets which affects library acquisition, as challenges facing publishing in Nigeria. Following these is the shortage of manpower and skills as indicated by 84(89.3%) respondents, then the shortage of capital as pointed out by 80(85.1%) respondents. Likewise is the problem of low level of literacy and reading culture has stated by 73(77.7%) respondents. Further still, 67(83.0%) respondents highlighted the problems of prevalence of repetitive and unfriendly state policies and lack of modern technologies. ; proliferation of imported books 62(65.9%); as well as the monopoly of the academic market by the foreign multinational firms in which a little more than half of the respondents 62(65.9%) agreed.

Respondents were generally in agreement that the problems identified can be addressed. About 86(91.5%) of the respondents agreed that authors' capacity should be improved in terms of quality and quantity. Likewise, majority of the respondents 89(94.7%) agreed that editorial/publishing capacities such as administration, typesetting, proof-reading, etc. should be improved while 81(86.1%) agreed that the problem of scholarly publishing can be solved by improving the business management. 75(79.8%) respondents agreed on improving marketing and distribution channels of academic works, 63(67.0%) of the respondents agreed on improving the academic works in the areas of access, use and impact in order to promote Nigerian scholarship, 75(79.8%) of the respondents agreed on the improvement of the improvement of archiving of academic books and journals, while 67(71.3%) of the respondents agreed that strengthening the local university presses mostly in the areas of finance, capital and administration could help promote Nigerian scholarship. Another way of promoting the Nigerian scholarship is by promoting the local publications instead of sending works overseas, the application of new technologies such as the Internet to local publishing, and proper funding of research works, in which virtually all the respondents 70(74.5%) agreed.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that university press plays a significant role in the promotion of scholarly publishing in Nigeria such as provision of publishing avenues for the staff of the university, promotion and dissemination of quality research, and publishing affordable books for students. Others were marketing the university to the outside world and reduction of over-reliance on foreign publishers.

It also established improved management of scholarly publishing in Nigeria as compared to the last few years although still confronted by a number of challenges. It

also found out that the application of new technologies to academic publishing has many significant impacts such as timely reviews of research work, speedy dissemination of academic works, etc.

In addition, infiltration of books produced by foreign multinational companies is a major challenge confronting academic publication in Nigeria. This is because Nigerian publishing infant industry cannot favourably compete with these well-established multinational companies.

Consequent upon the roles of the university press in the promotion of scholarly publishing in Nigeria, university presses should be more strengthened in terms of finance, skilled manpower and other factors of production in order to ensure high standard of book production. Although the impact of new technologies on scholarly publishing in Nigeria is very enormous, there is lack of proper integration of these technologies in scholarly publishing in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the study established that scholars do not have access to fund. Hence, in order to ensure that scholarly publishing is well embraced and developed compared to the advanced countries of the world, sufficient funds should be allocated by the institutions to research and development in order to encourage scholars.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations:

1. Increase in funding by the universities to facilitate research so as to encourage scholars to put in their best and contribute meaningfully to research and development.
2. University presses in Nigeria should be more strengthened and better equipped in terms of fund, technologies, and skilled man-power to enable them meet up with the production standard required of them. This will promote local publishing firms and discourage Nigerian scholars from sending their works abroad on the ground that the local presses are not competent enough.
3. Improvement of basic infrastructures like electricity, laboratory equipment, internet will create a conducive work environment that will encourage scholars to work at their best.
4. Nigeria's approval and full implementation of the National Book Policy is essential as this will provide direction for the publishing industry in Nigeria.
5. Further study can be embarked to see if there is any relationship between the new technology and the spate of infringement on copyright titles of author and if such has impact on scholarly publication in Nigeria.

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