

ReSciLaC N°10, vol.1
ISSN: 1840-8001



Indexation



Franklin



ZEITSCHRIFTEN
DATENBANK



Décembre 2019

Université d'Abomey-Calavi
Faculté des Lettres, Langues, Arts et Communication
LASODYLA-REYO / UAC – 2019



ReSciLaC

Revue des Sciences du Langage et de la Communication

Dépôt légal N°8184 du 15/10/2015
Bibliothèque Nationale, 4^{ème} trimestre
ISSN: 1840-8001 – ReSciLaC N°10, vol.1 – décembre 2019

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Multi-disciplinarity and Town-Gown Synergy: *Sine qua non* for Regional Industrialisation and Economic Transformation in West Africa



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Abstract

This paper examines the functionality of West African universities vis-à-vis their tripartite mandate-teaching, research and community service. Given that University research increases the body of theoretical knowledge, its application to societal problems, professional training for high-level jobs, and the education necessary for personality and societal development, this paper establishes the town-gown nexus as *sine qua non* for West Africa's sub-regional industrialisation and economic transformation. It appears scandalous that but for Cape Town University, South-Africa, ranked 200th of the top 1000 universities worldwide, Africa would have been completely missing on the top 200 list, going by the 2019 QS World University Ranking. Only three other two South-African and one Egyptian African Universities appear in the top 500! No West African university made that 1000 list. This study attempts an analytical and discussant study approach, utilising available source-materials—books, journals, unpublished theses and careful internet surfing. The business of universities is to identify societal problems and conduct researches to solve them. Findings show that most universities live in relative isolation from the larger society; as mono-causality and poor research dissemination have hitherto crippled the quest for creativity and innovation required to unleash sustainable development. Decrying the dilapidating state of Universities, the hub of structured research, the late Unilorin orator, Professor Shehu Jimoh, observed: "They refer to tertiary institutions, especially Universities as 'Ivory Towers' but I must say, with what is going on in these institutions of learning today, it would appear that the ivory has oozed out of the towers". Thus, spirited efforts must be launched to restore the ivory to their dilapidating towers. We recommend, *inter alia* therefore, a paradigm shift from mono-causal to multi-inter-cum-trans-disciplinary research approach, and a proper synergy between the town and the gown as *sine qua non* for West African regional industrialisation and economic transformation.

Keywords: Multi-disciplinarity, Town-Gown synergy, West Africa, Regional Industrialisation, Economic Transformation.

Introduction

Man's life and his sojourn in his terrestrial habitat - his physical and social environments - is ever replete with myriads of endless problems, to which solution is constantly sought! The need for man to conquer his environment has since the beginning of history and time, launched him into an unending escapade of, or a hunt for solutions and or betterment. When he fails in his quest or search, he tries again and searches again till solution is ascertained. This is called research! Even at that, man, from primitive times to modern, never rests on his oars, as he, in his ingenuity, believes there are always better ways and improved methods, and so research is a continuum *ad infinitum*. Hence, man, in his hysterical attempts at problem solving, oftentimes resorts to three major approaches, namely: experience, reasoning both inductive and deductive and research. For obvious reasons, research has occupied a central place and hitherto remains a most essential universal means and process of finding solutions to man's problems Aboyeji, Aiyedun and Ibrahim (2019) cited Cohen and Marion (1989).

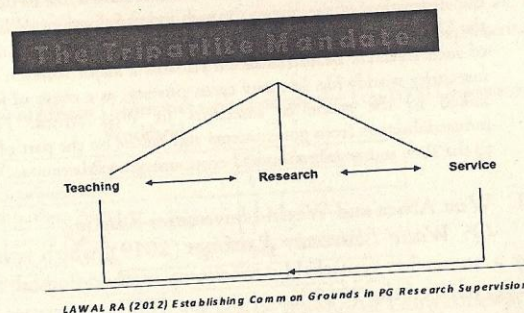
Our highly structured society, in its more frenzied attempts to further subjugate the universe, built what Lawal (2012), a seasoned educationist and varsity don, described as the "City of the Universe" or more aptly put, a "Universe-City", to engage, among other things, in 'structured research'. As such, this city, called university, is expected, by its design to be a microcosm of the entire universe, in terms of its composition—studentship, staffing, vistas of knowledge coverage, among its multifarious other activities, in frantic efforts towards finding solutions to the unending problems of mankind through research.

Research, as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is a conscious attempt, careful or diligent search and a studious inquiry or examination; especially investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws. Research has been broadly categorised into two—Basic and Applied. Whereas *basic research* is inquiry aimed at *discovering* the discovered basic knowledge, *applied research* is effort targeted towards *utilising* the discovered basic research for solving problems or developing new processes, products, or techniques. Aboyeji, Aiyedun and Ibrahim (2019) Millar and Senker (2000) in Alabi (2016) however, isolate University research, which to them, refers to the original investigation undertaken to acquire new vistas of knowledge in the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. This is *structured* research, which emanates from dissemination of research findings and/or academic writings through classroom teaching, seminars, workshops, project/dissertation/thesis writing, conferences or publications by 'scholars' for other scholars and the larger society at large.

Meanwhile, when the purpose of a thing is vague, abuse becomes rather inevitable. As such, Lawal (2012) and Mokuolu (2016) identify the traditional mandate of academics in the Ivory Towers, particularly the University to include the tripod: Teaching producing manpower, Research problem solving and Community service impact factor of the teaching and research, giving back to the society

The traditional university was said to have restricted itself mainly to a close circle of professors and students from the upper strata of society and lived in relative isolation, hence,

the proverbial "ivory tower". But the *ivory* oozed out of its *tower* when the traditional university, which laid down the basis for the progress of mankind, became too preoccupied with itself. And as Boyede (2019) observed, "When you are too sure of yourself in yourself, you end up disgracing yourself by yourself; that's the end of self". It



therefore became completely alienated from the society, lost much of its relevance and lost touch with the issues of its surroundings. Meanwhile, "...in their teaching activities, universities provide the professional training for high-level jobs, as well as the education necessary for the development of the personality. University research increased the body of theoretical knowledge as well as its application to practical problems" (Frithjof, 1978).

It behoves us to note that a University whose impact factor is nil or low is neither worth its salt nor worthy of that name. Be that as it may, besides Lawal's description of it as the Universe-city, universities are also proverbially often referred to as 'Ivory Tower'. Unfortunately however, the late Unilorin Orator, Professor Shehu Jimoh (2011:11), left these melancholic words on the appalling state of our Universities, the hub of structured research, thus: they refer to tertiary institutions, especially Universities as 'Ivory Towers' but I must say, with what is going on in these institutions of learning today, it would appear that the Ivory has oozed out of the towers.

The late Shehu Jimoh then went ahead to challenge all education stakeholders, especially members of the academia to join the crusade to restore the ivory to the dilapidating towers (Jimoh, 2011:11). This paper essentially resonates the challenge thrown by this veteran professor of Education *Par Excellence*, in consonance with the introductory message from the fliers of the 7th Annual Conference and 9th Annual General Meeting of the Association of West Africa Universities (AWAU, 2019), viz:

Many developmental indices have placed Africa as a developing continent. The General Assembly of the United Nations has in the year 2015 launched the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs as a sustainable agenda for the development of the world into a better abode for all its inhabitants. Similarly, The African Union has also launched the framework for the development of Africa for the next fifty years termed 'The Africa we Want' or simply, "Agenda 2063". The Agenda seeks to actualise a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, among others. Among the aims of both organs is development which will be achieved by industrialisation that will lead to economic transformation. Universities globally have been in the fore front for industrial development through research, policy and strategy. West Africa Universities therefore have a role to play in facilitating the rapid economic transformation of the region through industrialisation. Although a lot of research take place in the Universities, many need to be further developed and translated to proffer maximum benefits of such research. Industrialisation remains a major solution to the growing unemployment and insecurity worldwide. In many cases, poverty, as a result of job scarcity, has been identified and linked to the spade of insecurity in West Africa. The lack of definitive policy on industrialisation from governments and failure on the part of these governments also contribute to the slow industrialisation and economic growth.

I. West Africa and World Universities Ranking

QS World University Rankings (2019), which is believed to have continued to enjoy a somewhat remarkably consistent methodological framework in its metrics for ranking, released the 2019 list of the top 1000 universities worldwide. Table # 1 below provides us with a list of the seventeen African Universities that made the list:

Table # 1: List of African Universities ranked within the Top 1000 Universities Worldwide

S/No.	Name of University	Country	#Ranking/ #Range
1	University of Cape Town	South Africa	=200
2	University of Witwatersrand	South Africa	=381
3	Stellenbosch University	South Africa	=405
4	The American University in Cairo	Egypt	=420
5	Cairo University	Egypt	521-530
6	University of Johannesburg	South Africa	551-560
7	University of Pretoria	South Africa	561-570
8	Ain Shams University	Egypt	701-750
9	University of Kwazulu-Natal	South Africa	751-800
10	Al Akhawayn University Ifrane	Morocco	801-1000
11	Al Azhar University	Egypt	801-1000
12	Alexandria University	Egypt	801-1000
13	Assiut University	Egypt	801-1000
14	North-West University	South Africa	801-1000
15	Rhodes University	South Africa	801-1000
16	University of Nairobi	Kenya	801-1000
17	University of the Western Cape	South Africa	801-1000

Source: Adapted from QS World University Rankings (2019) Retrieved on 17th July, 2019
<https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2019>

As if the Table #1 above is not scandalous and appalling enough, it is rather lamentable that from the analysis, no West African University is enlisted in the top 1000 universities worldwide. It is indeed worrisome and appalling that if not for the University of Cape Town, South Africa that tied up with the Stockholm University, Sweden as the 200th best university, African universities would have been completely missing on the list of the top 200 world universities. Alas, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa (381), Stellenbosch University South Africa (405), the American University in Cairo, Egypt (420) are the only other African Universities in the top 500!

The worst-hit sub-region is Africa's sun-set sub-region, West Africa. Whereas South Africa, North Egypt and Morocco and East Kenya are all, at least represented, it is particularly absurd that only West Africa is completely unrepresented, in spite of over 350 universities.

Table # 2: Regional Analysis of African Universities ranked among the Top 1000 Universities Worldwide

S/No.	Continental Sub-Region	No./Frequency
1	Southern Africa	9
2	Northern Africa	7
3	Eastern Africa	1
4	Western Africa	Nil
	Total	17

Although one may not be too certain of the exact number of Universities in West Africa, data retrieved from via internet surfing, adapted into Table #3 below, suggests 350 Universities (public and private); apart from polytechnics and colleges. Indeed, going by the data gathered from the official website of the National Universities Commission

(NUC, 2019), Nigeria alone, for instance, as at October, 2019 has a total of 174 universities: 43 Federal, 52 State and 79 Private.

Table # 3: West African Countries, Population and No. of Universities

Rank	Country	Population 2019	No. of Universities
1	Nigeria	200,963,599	174
2	Ghana	30,417,856	8
3	Cameroon	25,876,380	15
4	Ivory Coast	25,716,544	32
5	Niger	23,310,715	3
6	Burkina Faso	20,321,378	5
7	Mali	19,658,031	5
8	Senegal	16,296,364	14
9	Guinea	12,771,246	4
10	Benin	11,801,151	39
11	Togo	8,082,366	8
12	Sierra Leone	7,813,215	3
13	Liberia	4,937,374	13
14	Mauritania	4,525,696	8
15	Gambia	2,347,706	5
16	Guinea Bissau	1,920,922	5
17	Cape Verde	549,935	9
Total			350

Source: Adapted From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_universities_and_colleges_by_country#Western_Africa Assessed 26th September, 2019

A Yoruba aphorism captures it this way, “The nudity of a masquerade should be a cause of summitry concern to its entire coven. In Isaiah I:18 in the Holy Bible, the Almighty God himself made such a summitry call to his people when He said: “Come let us reason together”. The Leadership of the Association of West Africa Universities (AWAU)/Association des Universités d’Afrique de l’Ouest in Collaboration with Universités d’Abomey-Calavi (UAC) has, in like manner, summoned this 7th Annual Conference and 9th Annual General Meeting with the aim of “gathering and sharing experiences from countries across West Africa especially, success stories from some Universities as well as present opportunity to share research experiences that are implementable by colleagues from other institutions” (AWAU, 2019).

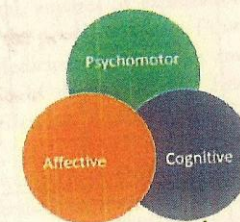
QS Yardsticks for World University Rankings

Paradoxically, without necessarily isolating specific examples, it is a general observation that products of African universities, even average students, excel in their studies, be it undergraduate or postgraduate, across universities in Europe, America or any other, for that matter. This may readily uphold the hypothesis in the affirmative vis-à-vis the cognitive content of learning. But, where did we get it wrong?

2. The Three Domains of Learning

Bloom’s taxonomy identifies three domains of learning, which Instructional designers, trainers, and educators often refer to as KSA Knowledge [cognitive], Skills [psychomotor], and Attitudes [affective]), namely:

- Cognitive: Mental skills *Knowledge*
- Affective: Growth in feelings or emotional areas *Attitude or self*
- Psychomotor: Manual or physical skills *Skills* Bloom, et al, 1956.



Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor CAP The CAP transits through the three Hs thus: Head Cognitive knowledge, intellectual or mental magnitude to Heart Affective, Behavioural conviction and attitudinal change to Hand Psychomotor, translation of liquid or abstract knowledge into solid base and/or entrepreneurial skills for empowerment. Unfortunately, most of our teaching and learning seem not to transcend the first-Head knowledge), even though we might have excelled there marvellously. Whereas we excel in the cognitive domain, we seem to lag behind in the Affective and Psychomotor domains. Unfortunately and probably deliberately, ranking is not based on such a yardstick alone. Meanwhile, back home in motherland Africa, her Universities hardly pop-up in terms of ranking. One, they not us design and determine the yardsticks for ranking and as the African maxim goes, “until lions learn to write their own histories, tales of hunting would never cease to praise-sing the hunters”. Or can a cockroach ever be innocent in the gathering of fowls? Two, with all sincerity of purpose, there are obvious missing links in our educational system, which must be objectively identified and fixed to ensure functionality of the system.

According to the *QS World University Rankings*, universities are ranked according to the six simple metrics below. These six metrics adopted for determining what she believes are capable of effectively capturing university performance.

Table #4 Showing the Six Metrics for *QS World University Rankings*

S/No	Basis/Yardstick	%	Remark
1	Academic reputation	40%	Based on our <i>Academic Survey</i> , it collates the expert opinions of over 94,000 individuals in the higher education space regarding teaching and research quality at the world’s universities. In doing so, it has grown to become the world’s largest survey of academic opinion, and, in terms of size and scope, is an unparalleled means of measuring sentiment in the academic community.
2	Employer reputation	10%	Students will continue to perceive a university education as a means by which they can receive valuable preparation for the employment market. It follows that assessing how successful institutions are at providing that preparation is essential for a ranking whose primary audience is the global student community. Our <i>Employer Reputation</i> metric is based on almost 45,000 responses to our <i>QS Employer Survey</i> , and asks employers to identify those institutions from which they source the most competent, innovative, effective graduates. The <i>QS Employer Survey</i> is also the world’s largest of its kind.
3	Faculty/Student Ratio	20%	The extent to which institutions are able to provide students with meaningful access to lecturers and tutors, is considered to be a parameter for measuring teaching quality. It is held unto here that the higher the number of faculty members per student the more

			the teaching burden on each individual academic reduces his productivity.
4	Citations per faculty/staff	20%	Teaching is one key pillar of an institution's mission. Another is research output. We measure institutional research quality using our <i>Citations per Faculty</i> metric. To calculate it, we take the total number of citations received by all papers produced by an institution across a five-year period by the number of faculty members at that institution. To account for the fact that different fields have very different publishing cultures – papers concerning the Life Sciences are responsible for nearly half of all research citations as of 2015 – we <i>normalize</i> citations. This means that a citation received for a paper in Philosophy is measured differently to one received for a paper on Anatomy and Physiology, ensuring that, in evaluating an institution's true research impact, both citations are given equal weight. All citations data is sourced using Elsevier's <i>Scopus</i> database, the world's largest repository of academic journal data; excluding self-citations.
5	International faculty ratio	5%	The ability of a university to attract international faculty/staff demonstrates a highly global outlook, and provides both students and staff with a multinational environment, facilitating exchange of best practices and beliefs.
6	International student ratio	5%	The ability of a university to attract students from across the world also suggests that it possesses a strong international brand, and provides students with international sympathies and global awareness, among other advantages it confers

Source: Adapted from <https://www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings/methodology> Retrieved 17th July, 2019.

This paper isolates two fundamental missing links in the functionality of West African Ivory Towers: methodological approach and the impact factor on the society. Please recall, as noted earlier, that, in part, this, among other factors contributed to the oozing out of the proverbial traditional ivories out of their towers.

3. Reclaiming Africa's Lost Glory: The Egyptian Civilisation

It is rather paradoxical that Africans and the black race, for that matter, pride themselves as the mother of all civilisation, with recourse to ancient Egyptian civilisation with its undeniable contributions and legacies to humanity, teaching mankind, and taking the lead in all facets of life, in astronomy, agriculture, medicine, and what have you. Corroborating the theory of the primacy of the African man, Dr. Leaky, the European palaeontologist who discovered Lucy, argued: [...] the oldest set of human bones ever found on this planet, Africa is the birthplace of the human family. According to Mendel, the European scientist who proved that dark genes are dominant and light genes are recessive, Africans are the original people, and the parents of all human beings (Diop and Clarke, 2006).

Indeed, it was very recently, following the characteristic Eurocentric arrogance, that the Mesopotamian civilization in Asia began to rival that of Egypt in Africa. Going by history, civilisation is known particularly to have begun around the River Nile, where we have the ancient Egypt. The Neolithic revolution, which had its origin in Northern Africa was a gradual process which encouraged the beginnings of Agriculture stockbreeding, damming system, irrigation system, well water, screw and Shaduff, and crop production), development of state system 3000 BC), the discovery of metal copper and bronze for tools and weapons, metal works in gold and silver; urban revolution, centralisation of political authority, complex civil service, the Egyptian Pyramids, elaborate religious system strong belief in a future life, first example of belief in

one God monotheism by Ikhnaton, Mummification precursor for modern embalment of the dead and mortuaries), Hieroglyphic Script Writing first alphabets, papyrus or paper, reed and ink), navigation first sea-going ships, early Suez Canal, voyages of exploration down the Red Sea), Economy and living standard, trade with the people of Crete, Punt, Cyprus, Syria and Phoenicia), learning: early discoveries in Medicine, Mathematics and Astronomy: Egyptian astronomy is probably the oldest one in the world; the first calendar 365-day calendar already started to be in use, the classification of the day into 24 hours, among numerous others (Clement, 1980).

On the whole, Egypt led the world in most prominent aspects of civilisation and technology we have today. So, whether in the pure, basic, applied or practical sciences and technology or metaphysics, medical science practice, astronomy, astrology, cosmology, navigation, agriculture, arts, writing, among other fields, Egypt apparently prepared a soft ground for the rest of the world to tread. What is, however, unfortunate and paradoxical today, is that Africa seems to have been relegated to the lowest rung of the ladder. Worse still is the fact that not many people recognise the pioneering role of Egypt or Africa, for that matter, as the 'Parents of all Humanity' and 'Cradle of Human Civilisation'.

Among other mechanisms put in place which, regrettably have robbed Africa of these unprecedented values and heritage include the dehumanising slave trade (trade in human merchandise), colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism, as well as the capitalist and socialist ideologies. Worse still, the activities of organisations known collectively as the 'corporatocracy' which are behind the new global empire are being masterminded to perpetrate all manners of malevolence against the rather gullible political economies (Aboyeji and Aboyeji, 2016: 222; Nwabueze, 2010: 297). Bishop Desmond Tutu captured it thus: when the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land, they said, 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them, we had the Bible in our hands and they had the land (Shah, 2014; Aboyeji, 2019).

It is no wonder therefore that given this place of Africa in blazing the trail for man, with particular reference to Egypt, after many years of isolation, early man betook himself and his new skills to Europe and to Asia Minor, perhaps because parts of Africa were becoming progressively dry or because Europe and Asia were becoming increasingly warm. It therefore seems likely that the first true Asians were African immigrants who had been impelled to seek a more hospitable homeland for themselves. This process of transition, transformation and evolutionary adaptation is another pointer to the contributions of Africa to the growth of the world—a pointer to the fact that Europe owed much of her advancements to Africa at different stages of history from time immemorial (Oyegoke, 2002: 17).

The words of Alvin Toffler (1991), in his celebrated *Powershift: Knowledge, Wealth, and Power at the Edge of the 21st Century* suffices that "The illiterate of the 21st Century are not those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn". Indeed, the inevitability of research, through which we learn, unlearn and relearn, underscores the rationale for the global aggressiveness for the acquisition and attainment of new vista of knowledge through research. It is, indeed, high time Africa

regained her pride of place in the global community, and our universities have a leading role to play in this regard.

4. Towards Better Functionality and Improved Impact Factor

The main thrust of this paper is to examine the functionality of the West African university system vis-à-vis its tripartite mandate-teaching, research and community service. Given that University research increases the body of theoretical knowledge, its application to practical problems, the professional training for high-level jobs, as well as the education necessary for the development of the personality and society, the paper establishes the nexus between the town and the gown as sine qua non for regional industrialisation and economic transformation in West Africa. Below are measures recommended towards better functionality and improved impact factors for West Africa universities.

4.1 University-Industry Collaboration: California's Premier University Stanford Model

Indeed, the global aggressiveness towards the acquisition and attainment of new vistas of knowledge through research is today, not only inevitable but quite explicable as the advancement of any economy is directly linked to the performance of its industries (Alabi, 2016); the leading industry being the education industry. Universities act as ladders for social mobility and laboratories for research. A significant number of universities indeed fail on both counts. However, universities that cannot claim to be either mobility-booster or knowledge-creator are the laggards (Dimitrios and Reeves, 2017). For instance, California is a mere state in the United States of America. Yet, it is said to be the sixth largest economy in the world, with an economy that is reportedly larger than that of France, Brazil and that of over fifty combined African Countries. What is of interest to us here is that the hub of this flourishing economy is its premier university, Stanford University, as much of its economy is built around the University. Stanford developed the Silicon Valley, with multibillion-dollar companies that are richer than countries, like Apple, eBay, Cisco, Lockheed, Hewlett Packard (HP), Google, Netflix, Facebook, Oracle, Tesla, etc. Its capacity to convert much of the intellectual output and technology industry where the technologies and inventions spewing out of Stanford into money spinning enterprises and saleable products within its economy is a lesson West African universities must learn from (Fidel, 2019). This is one missing link between the cognitive and psychomotor domains. If fixed, we can take back our rightful place as parent of all humanity.

4.2 The Unilorin Example

The efforts of the Laboratory-to-Product Labtop Centre, University of Ilorin and its incumbent Vice Chancellor (who holds patency for a handful of inventions in converting 'Waste to Wealth' is one of such commendable right moves towards the right direction.

Patents: Professor Abdulkareem Sulyman Age

- (1) Kareem, S.A., UNILOR OIL SORBING WAFERS, Federal Republic of Nigeria, RP160052005)
- (2) Kareem, S.A., UNILOR LUBRICATING GREASE, Federal Republic of Nigeria, RP160062005)
- (3) Kareem, S.A., UNILOR CANDLE, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, RP160072005)
- (4) Abdulkareem, S.A. and Amoloye, T.O., (2013), CATALYTIC CONVERSION OF LOW DENSITY POLYETHYLENE DISCARDED PURE WATER SACHETTO SOLID, LIQUID AND GASEOUS HYDROCARBON FUELS, NG/P/2010/332.
- (5) Abdulkareem, S.A. and Abdulaziz, N.A., (2013), CATALYTIC CONVERSION OF HIGH DENSITY POLYETHYLENE DISCARDED YOUGHURT BOTTLE SOLID, LIQUID AND GASEOUS HYDROCARBON FUELS, NG/P/2010/333.
- (6) Ajiboye, A.T., Adedokun, G.A., Adewuyi, O.A. Abdulkareem, S.A., Yusuf, A.O. and Mahmud, H.O., (2016), UNILORIN AUTOMOBILE SPEED LIMITER, developed for NUC and AVCNU Research Challenge, Patent Filed.

The focus of this year's AWAU Conference, with particular reference to its very first sub-theme, "University-Industry relationship/Collaboration" rekindles the embers of hope that West African Universities seem awake now to the reality of the enormous challenges before us. Fareed Zakari, renowned news kingpin, sequel to an international survey, has this to say:

...let a thousand flowers blossom. Universities...should have to compete for customers. A sophisticated economy needs a wide variety of Universities pursuing a wide variety of missions. More importantly, Universities are among the most important engines of the knowledge economy. Not only do they produce the brain workers who man it, they also provide much of its backbone, from laboratories to brains, computer networks, etc. (Ogbogbo 2014:92; Aboyeji, Aiyedun and Ibrahim, 2019).

In industrial countries today, the main issue is to open up the elite university to the multitudes of young minds and to adjust to current democratic, pluralistic society, while at the same time maintain the standard of teaching and level of research. There is therefore an urgent need for re-orientation towards purposeful research in collaboration with our industries (Frithjof, 1978). Indeed, as captured in the words of Aristotle, "He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god" (Matthew, 2008).

4.3 Improved Dissemination of Research Output

Central to the broad spectrum of scholarship, which generally entails the generation of new or confirmation of old vistas of knowledge, establishment of clear-cut values and determination of best practices, by way of contributing to scholarship, is research—doing, teaching and disseminating research findings (Mokuolu, 2016). No doubt, a lot of researches are being carried out. However, many of such research ideas that should have benefitted the larger society and launch the sub-region into the fore front of industrial

development and economic transformation are lying fallow, wasting away and merely accumulating dusts on the shelves of our libraries, for those lucky enough to find their ways to the library. There is therefore, no serious link and synergy between the university and community. The town-gown synergy is therefore lacking.

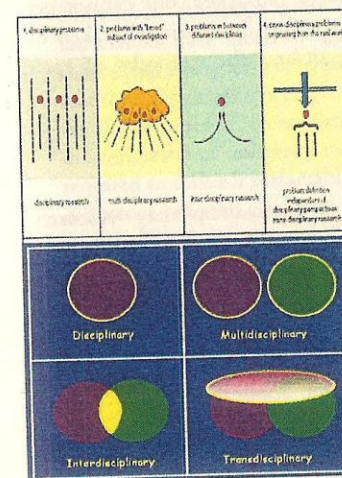
This picture caught one's attention on Facebook with these words: "So so annoying: submit 4 copies to your department or else you won't graduate...this is where it ends".

One only wonders if this is not true of most of our research outputs in this sub-region. We may equally wish to probe into what becomes of the several millions of undergraduate and postgraduate research projects we turn in year in year out from our 350 or so universities.

Perhaps, the ultimate index for determining the success of a university is its impact factor on society or its improvement in the lives of the people it serves. In other words, a university must be ultimately preoccupied with the needs of society. The output-benefits of a university can only be maximal if the university and society are organically linked together. The modern universities were designed to soothe the needs of their time. Frithjof, 1978. One fundamental way of achieving this is through proper dissemination of research outputs. Indeed, the fourth of the six QS metrics for university ranking that is citation per faculty/staff could receive considerable boost if the research outputs of both staff and students are accorded sufficient attention.



Findings reveal that undeniably, perspective determines position, and position, in turn, determines perspective. As such, mono-disciplinary solution to pragmatic issues do not only flout best practices in the contemporary world, but can also easily prove to be impractical in many instances. Of a truth, it is not every problem that requires an interdisciplinary approach, but until every available relevant perspective is ransacked, one may not get the entire picture correctly. In doing this, however, cognizance must be cautiously taken of the pitfalls of each approach, while utilising the strengths therein. The paper maintains that while any of the above suggested approaches could be adopted in a bid to achieving best practices in contemporary research efforts, a well-coordinated tripartite multi-cum-inter-and trans-disciplinary approach is recommended (Aboyeji, 2015:12).



Types of Collaboration

Source: Mokuolu, O. A. (2016). "Research as a Tool for Academic Excellence" being the title of a Presentation made at the Training Workshop organised by CREDIT, Unilorin for Lecture 1 and below at the University of Ilorin, on 21st September, 2016.

Multi-disciplinary depicts the study of the same research from different disciplinary perspectives. *Inter-disciplinary*, here, refers to the integration and interlocking of several disciplines for research purposes; for example, Pure Sciences generate theories to be solved by the Applied Sciences. *Trans-disciplinary* portrays the understudying of a phenomenon general to several disciplines, all coming together to unravel a mutual 'pandemic'. This is because, "perspective", people say, "determines position" just as position, in turn, determines perspective (Aboyeji, 2015: 12).

Today, this multi-cum-inter-and trans-disciplinary approach to historical research has gained currency. For instance, Afolabi Olabisi and her sister, Afolabi Aduragbemi both graduated from the University of Ilorin this year. Whereas Olabisi graduated from History and International Studies, Aduragbemi finished from Anatomy. Yet, both of them engaged in meaningful inter-disciplinary collaboration in their research efforts. While Olabisi wrote her dissertation on "A History of the Special Education in Nigeria: A Study of Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, 1974-2018", Aduragbemi wrote her seminar on "The Relevance of Sign Language to the Deaf". The research output was quite rewarding and less stressful, as they both pulled their resources together, each looking at it from her own disciplinary perspective. In Mokuolu's 2016 words:

5. Paradigm Shift from Mono-disciplinary to Trans-Multi-cum-Inter-Disciplinary Research

There is also the need for a paradigm shift from mono-disciplinary or mono-causal traditional research to contemporary holistic research methodology (ies Mono-disciplinary approach, often from a parochial mind-set, is no longer so rewarding academically). In history, for instance, mono-disciplinary approach alone can no longer provide satisfactory answers to "all" that bugs the inquisitive mind of the modern man about his past. The importance of archaeology thus, lies in the fact that for several thousand millennia of Africa's past for which there were neither written records nor reliable oral evidence, it is probably only archaeology that can be used to record man's obscure past. As part of best practices in our modern world, therefore, more holistic research methodologies are now being adopted; such as the inter-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches. As rightly put: Experience has shown that the greatest gains do not come from an improvement in a single process, but from the interaction of suitable combination of improved practices and that fragmented research efforts often prove ineffective and costly (Frithjof, 1978).

No man is an island today and we need to collaborate. The only issue is when you collaborate you must negotiate for your relevance in the partnership. In other words you must seek to main your identity within the collaboration. You are not there just for your name to be added. If you are statistician, then you should show your skills within a collaboration through a robust statistical analysis. If a microbiologist collaborates with a history, they could both tell the history of malaria in Nigeria. History for the historian and malaria for the microbiologists.

Indeed, not until every available relevant perspective is ransacked, one cannot get the true picture correctly. In doing this, however, cognizance must be cautiously taken of the pitfalls and weaknesses of each approach, while one utilises the strengths of each (Aboyeji, 2015:12).

6. Recommendation

We recommend, *inter alia*,

- i. a paradigm shift from mono-causal to multi-inter-cum-trans-disciplinary research approach as part of best practices in our modern world; given that research capacity, identified as a central element of the tripartite mandate of academics, critical for acquiring new vistas of knowledge;
- ii. a proper synergy and nexus between the town and the gown as *sine qua non* for regional industrialisation and economic transformation in West Africa; given that University research increases the body of theoretical knowledge, its application to practical problems, the professional training for high-level jobs, as well as the education necessary for the development of the personality and society;
- iii. curriculum break-away and emancipation from the colonial/Western model; given that universities were built more or less according to Western models and, sometimes, even as branches of old European institutions. Thus, from the go, they were lacking in functionality since their curriculum was not designed to address the specific needs and challenges of their immediate environment. However, the subjects and methodologies correspond to the society in which they were generated: American and European universities meet the interests of current or past American and European industrial societies. Research projects and methods are centred on Western problems, needs, and conditions (Frithjof, 1978). Our curriculum therefore, needs to be re-directed to address the peculiar needs, idiosyncrasies and ethos of our own immediate society, for better functionality;
- iv. Spirited efforts towards the functionality of the West African university system vis-à-vis its tripartite mandate-teaching, research and community service. Indeed, if West African regional universities will come to limelight from the present obscurity, they must concertedly work on these criteria with sincerity of purpose: Academic reputation 40%), Employer reputation 10%), Faculty/Student Ratio 20%), Citations per faculty 20%), International faculty ratio 5% and International student ratio 5%. We must therefore revisit the ranking metrics, make deliberate but spirited efforts to meet up with the staff-student ratio 20%), citations per faculty/staff 20 %), International Faculty/Students ratio 10 %. These, put in place, will automatically boost the academic and employer reputation, which account for the remaining 40 % and 10 % respectively.

Conclusion

This paper has considered it that man's life is replete with myriads of problems to which solution is constantly sought, and it is the business of universities to diagnose such societal problems and organise structured researches to solve them. The deplorable condition of our regional Universities, the hub of structured research, is however lamentable. Although a lot of research takes place in the Universities, our regional universities have failed to make the list of top ranking universities. Our findings show that: One, many of our researchers still adopt the mono-causal or mono-disciplinary methodology in this twenty-first century. Two, most of our researches eventually end up on shelves, merely accumulating dusts, year in year out. Thus, poor methodology and dissemination of university research often crippled the quest for creativity and innovation required to unleash sustainable national or regional development. Indeed, what makes the difference between graduates of 'world class' universities that are highly sought after and ours is that they carry out 'leading-edge' researches, among other things, which ensure functionality. Three, most universities, the proverbial 'ivory tower' have remained traditional, restricting themselves mainly to the circle of lecturer-students relation, and thus, living in relative isolation from the larger society. They therefore lost touch with their immediate environment they are designed to serve. This absence of synergy between the proverbial town and the gown, among other factors, serve as ory clogs in the wheel of regional industrialisation and economic transformation within the West African sub-region.

The main thrust of this study was therefore, to examine the missing links between the cognitive quality in West Africa's Universities and functionality or its impact factor vis-à-vis its tripartite mandate—teaching, research and community service. We interrogated the effect of inter-trans-cum-multi-disciplinary research methodology/approach and also investigated the place of renewed synergy between the town society and gown university as *sine qua non* for regional industrialisation and transformation in West Africa. Indeed, industrialisation today, remains a major solution to the growing unemployment, mounting insecurity cataclysm and the endless challenges militating against continental and regional development. West Africa's Universities therefore have a role to play in facilitating the rapid economic transformation of the region through industrialisation. It is our contention, therefore, that West African universities have a lot to learn from the Stanford model, which developed multi-billion dollar companies that made the state of California the sixth largest economy, globally, richer than France, Brazil and over fifty 50 combined African Countries.

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