

The Development of Academic Journals in Institutions of Higher Learning in Kano State, Nigeria

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Introduction

Academic journals are a major medium through which research findings are published. Through publication in such journals, researchers communicate their methodologies and findings. The modern process of scholarly communication relies heavily on books, monographs, and conference proceedings, but most commonly on academic journals (Oluronsola 2001). The journal is fundamental to scholarly communication. In addition, the status conferred by publication in highly-rated journals is essential to the career of academics. Journals have remained essentially unchanged in form and function since their beginning. Science as we know it is scarcely imaginable without the scholarly journal. It is of immense important to note that, through journal, researchers and academics access important information about recent developments in their field. Studies by Oluronsola and Opaleke (1997) reveal the importance of publishing in scholarly journals for promotion and tenure. The primary function of academic journal is to report on original research, making it available to the rest of the scholars within the discipline, many are published by professional associations or universities.

The Concept and History of Academic Journals

Koepf (2001) describes journals as having a "serious look." Articles are written by scholars within specific disciplines, the language used is specific to the discipline covered. It assumes some knowledge on the part of the reader. Kronick (1976) maintains that a journal is usually addressed more limited audience than a newspaper does and is not as firmly bound to events of the day. Milne (1999) defines scholarly communication as "the social phenomenon whereby intellectual and creative activity is passed from one scholar to another." This can be formal or informal. Formal communication usually involves journal articles. According to Yahaya (1993), a journal refers to those periodicals created by any of the following:

- A constituted body: an educational institution, ministry, board, bureau, council, commission, library, center, academy, division, or department.
- A specialized group: scientists, historians, educators, economists, archaeologists, linguists, folklorists, medical doctors
- An interest group: student associations, religious group, trade union.

Abba (2004) describes journals as periodicals issued by academic communities for a particular purpose or audience. This paper considers academic and scholarly journal to be the same: publications dealing with matters of current interest to groups such as faculty members. The history of academic journals can be traced to the 16th century AD. Wells (1999) reports that until the late seventeenth

century, communication between scholars depended on personal contact and meetings arranged by learned societies (e.g. the Royal Society of London). As the membership of these society increased, it was harder to attend the meetings, and proceedings circulated as a record of the meeting. The proceedings became a place to publish papers that had not been presented at the meeting. Thus, the beginning of what we now recognize as scholarly journals.

Ornstein (1963) states that, "on January 5, 1665, Denis de Sallo published the first western scholarly journal, titled *Journal des sçavans* ." MacDonell (1999) argues that the *Journal des sçavans* was not regarded as publication of academic community until 1903 when it came under the auspices of *Academic inscriptions et Belles-lettres* of the Institute de France. According to Ornstein (1963) the major objectives of the *Journal* were:

- Publish current events in academia
- Provide obituaries of famous men.
- Catalogue and short description of books
- Publish experiments in physics and chemistry, observations of astrological phenomenon.
- Print decisions of tribunals and Universities.

MacDonell (1999) notes how learned societies in other countries created journals on the model of the *Journal de sçavans*. In Africa, the history of academic journals is quite remarkable. A considerable number of journals exist in Africa; for example, the *Journal of Negro History* , a quarterly publication founded in 1916 by Carter G. Woodson to correct through scholarship white racist views of African American history and culture (Myers 1999). From its inception, the publication has discussed the full range of black experiences from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries. Contributors highlighted the struggle and achievements of African Americans under slavery, as well as reviewing books and compiling bibliographies of material from Africa and America. One of the most important contributions of the journal to the body of scholarship on African Americans was its publication of primary source material, which many white scholars believed did not exist. This journal revealed the existence of these sources and facilitated African American primary research.

African professional associations and learned society have long published research in journals and conference proceedings. Stilwell (2000) reports that the *Journal of Librarianship and Archives* has been published in Africa since 1933. Aina (1997) traces the origin of academic journals published in Africa, including *South African Journal of Library and Information Science* , created in 1933, *West Africa Library Association News* (1954) and *S.A. Archives Journal* (1959). Olukoju (2004) traces the history of academic journals in Nigeria, reporting that:

In Nigeria the beginnings of academic research and publishing could be traced back to the establishment of University College, Ibadan in 1948. From then till the late 1970s, Ibadan was the fountain of academic research, particularly in humanities. Given the preoccupation with political independence, the focus on indirect rule and political history is quite understandable.

Olukoju further asserts that, "the Historical Society of Nigeria ... maintained three credible publishing outlets for academic research," including the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* . Abayode (1978) observes further that, "it was ... a respected scholarly publication that attracted articles beyond Nigeria though, with few exceptions, they focused on political issues."

The Birth of Academic Journals in Kano State

Bayero University was the first institution in Kano state to establish an academic journal. The Journal of Savanna and Sudanic Research, called Kano Studies, was founded in 1965, just a year after Abdullahi Bayero College, now Bayero University, was founded (Abba 2004). In a related development, Kano State government established institutions of higher learning beginning in 1975

(Danyaro1991). These institutions established many journals. The central concern of this paper is to determine their existence, title, and status, among other things.

Statement of the Problem

Scholarly journals are vehicles for communicating research findings. Such journals occupy the pinnacle in extending the frontiers of knowledge and are the principal medium for disseminating new knowledge. Aina () states that “the non-availability of periodical titles in libraries could pose a serious problem to the research efforts of scientists.” Moreover, irregular publication of academic journals can create a serious problem to faculty at promotion time, because promotion often depends on publication. Zaharadeen warns that,

If we cannot maintain our local publications we will be failing ... to communicate ... with ... colleagues who cannot get easy access to journals from abroad, even where they include much of our local material. In addition, we need active locally based journals, with consistently good standards of writing and physical production, by way of maintaining our profile on the international scene.

In view of these problems, the researcher undertook an empirical investigation to find assess the situation and offer suggestions on how academic journals in institutions of higher learning in Kano state can be sustained.

Purpose of the Study

Objectives of this study:

1. To ascertain the existence of such journals in institutions of higher learning in Kano state.
2. To determine the name of the journals and the year they were established
3. To determine the status of the journals, i.e., whether ceased or active
4. To identify the problems associated with the journals
5. To recommend measures aimed at solving problems.

Research Questions

1. What academic journals exist in institutions under study?
2. How many of such journals are produced by institutions of higher learning and their names?
3. What is the status of the journals (ceased or active)?
4. What problems are associated with the journals produced by the institutions in question?
5. What measures can be taken to address the identified problems?

Methodology

The study used a survey, in which a questionnaire was designed to elicit information on academic journals in the institutions of higher learning in Kano state. The population for this study comprises fifteen institutions of higher learning. The respondents for the study include:

1. Heads of academic faculties or Schools
2. Heads of academic departments
3. Head of academic units/centers

Discussion of Findings

The responses indicated that five institutions produce academic journals. (See appendix for the list of the journals and their respective institutions.) Table 1 below summarises the data.

Table 1. List of Academic Journals in Institutions of Higher Learning in Kano State

| Institution | Active journals | Ceased journals | University or College-based journals | Faculty/School/Unit-based journals | Departmental journals | Total |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Bayero University, Kano (1965) | 15 | 08 | 02 | 06 | 14 | 23 |
| Federal College of Education, Kano (1993) | 07 | 01 | 02 | 05 | 01 | 08 |
| Kano state College of Education, Kumbotso, Kano (1998) | 4 | - | - | 3 | 1 | 04 |
| Federal College of Education Technical Bichi (2003/4) | 1 | - | - | 01 | - | 01 |
| Kano State Polytechnic (2004/5) | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 01 |
| Total | 27 | 9 | 5 | 15 | 16 | 37 |

Bayero University, Kano produces the largest number of journals, 23, including both ceased and active.

The study also reveals that academic journals in institutions of higher learning suffer from financial constraints. Olukoju (2004) rightly observes that the most fundamental challenge of academic journals is funding, along with low subscription numbers, lack of standard articles, and a lengthy peer review process. Treloar (1995) admits that, "There is a significant lag between completion of a paper and publication, sometimes years ." Other variables identified including problems of typesetting and low quality binding. A higher mortality rate among journals is another problem. In Africa, most scholarly journals suffer a variety of problems, most common being short life span. Aina and Mobuwanko (1996), Wise (1994), Akande (1980), Mohammed (2007), and Yahayas have all confirmed these findings.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Based on the findings revealed by the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Parent institutions should ensure that substantial amounts of money are budgeted to support the journal production and distribution, which will subsidise the subscription rates and thereby attract more subscribers.

2. Higher education institutions should consider a budget allocation for research and publication, to encourage faculty members to embark on research projects.
3. Lack of adequate and current materials in most of the libraries in institutions of higher learning does not permit or encourage academics to develop a culture of writing standard articles; libraries should be stocked with relevant and current literature to support academic pursuits.
4. Librarians in institutions of higher learning should make the case to administrators for the acquisition of current journals.
5. Peer reviewers should be encouraged to review and return manuscripts in a timely way.
6. The editors should publish only articles that meet publication criteria (Iya: 2001) and improve the quality of binding to further attract patronage by both authors and subscribers.
7. Journals should make space for advertisements in order to boost the financial base of their publication. Advertisements could be for seminars, workshops conferences, newly-published books and journals, among others (Iya: 2001).

Scholarly journals are an essential avenue for disseminating research, and they serve as a medium of communication among scholars. They deserve to be maintained and sustained to scholars across disciplines.

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Appendix 1. List of Academic Journals Available in Institutions of Higher Learning in Kano State

| Institution | Title | Publisher | Active or Ceased |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Bayero University, Kano | a) Kano Studies: A journal of Savanna and Sudanic Research (1965) | University | Ceased |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | b) Harsunan Nijeriya (1971) | CSNI/BUK | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | c) The Journal of Education in Africa (1978) | Faculty of Education | Ceased |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | d) Geography Journal (1978) | Department of Geography | Ceased |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | e) Ganga: a journal of literature studies (1978) | Department of Nigerian Languages | Ceased |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | f) Kakaki: a journal of creative writing (1979) | Department of English and European Languages (now English and French) | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | g) Journal of General Studies (1980) | General Studies Department/university | Ceased |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | h) Gata nan (1980) | Department of Nigerian Languages | Ceased |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | i) Journal of Tropical Architecture (1981) | Department of Geography | Ceased |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | j) Nigerian Journal of French Studies (1980) | Department of European Languages now department of English and French | Ceased |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | k) Dirasatul Arabiyya (1980) | Department of Arabic | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | l) Journal of Social and Management Studies (JOSAM) (1994) | Faculty of Social and Management Science | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | m) Journal of research in health and sports science (1996) | Department of Physical and Health Education | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | n) FAIS Journal of Humanities (1999) | Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | o) Bayero Business Review (2003) | Department of Business Administration | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | p) Bayero International Journal of Accounting Research (BIJAR) (2003) | Department of Accounting | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | q) Journal of Engineering Technology (JET) (2001) | Faculty of Technology | The maiden issue is in the process of publishing |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | r) International Journal of Pure and Applied Science (JOPAS) (2001) now available online @ http://www.iipas.com | Faculty of Sciences | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | s) Kano Journal of Education Studies (1994) | Department of Education | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | t) Biological and Environmental Sciences Journal for Tropics (BEST) (2004) | Department of Biological Sciences | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | u) International Journal of Adult Education and Community Development Services (JAECS) (2004) | Department of Adult Education and Community Services | The maiden issue is yet out |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | v) The West African Journal of Language, Literature and Criticism: a Multi-Lingual Bi-annual) (WAJLIC) (1999) | Department of Nigerian Languages | Ceased |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | Bayero Journal of Interdisciplinary studies (2007) | University Based Journal | Active |

| Institution | Title | Publisher | Active or Ceased |
|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Federal College of Education, Kano | TAMBARI: Kano Journal of Education (A Journal of Federal College of Education, Kano) (1993) | College Journal | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | Women and Education: A journal of Federal College of Education Association, Kano (FEDWA) (1994) | College Journal | Ceased |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | Nigerian Journal of Educational Research (1998) | School of Education | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | WAZOBIA (2000) | Department of Nigeria | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | Business, Agric, Home Economic and Fine/applied arts (BAHF) (2001) | School of Vocational Education | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | Nigerian Journal of Education Services (2002) | School of Education | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | Nigerian Journal of Educational Review (2002) | School of Education | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kano | Vocational Renaissance: A Journal of Vocational Education (2202) | School of Vocational Education | Active |

| Institution | Title | Publisher | Active or Ceased |
|---|---|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Kano State College of Education, Kumbotso | Kano Journal of Arts and Social Sciences (1998) | School of Social Sciences | Ceased |
| Federal College of Education, Kumbotso | Kano Journal of Sciences (2001) | School of Sciences | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kumbotso | Kano Journal of Vocational Education (2002/2003) | School of Vocational Education | Active |
| Federal College of Education, Kumbotso | School of Education department of Educational Psychology and Guidance and Counseling May (2005) | | Active |

| Institution | Title | Publisher | Active or Ceased |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Federal College of Education Technical Bichi | Bichi Journal of Education | College Journal | Active |

| Institution | Title | Publisher | Active or Ceased |
|---|--|---------------------|------------------|
| Kano State Polytechnic (Central Administration) | TAMA Journal: a Multi disciplinary journal of Kano State Polytechnic | Polytechnic Journal | Active |