



CAMEROON PROFESSORS PUBLISH: A REPLY TO NWANATIFUNWACO'S 'CAMEROON: PROFESSORS WITHOUT PUBLICATIONS'

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Abstract

This paper is a rebuttal to NwanatifuNwaco's blog post captioned "Cameroon: Professors without Publications" (at <https://chiefnwaco.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/professors-without-publications/>, retrieved on 29 November 2014). Nwaco purports that Cameroon academics—university intellectuals (researchers, scholars or professors and research students)—largely do not produce and/or publish scholarly works such as research papers, book chapters, and monographs. His claims are principally based on the unavailability of titles and abstracts by Cameroon professors in his Google searches. He also alludes—rightly and/or wrongly—to the partisan politics that compels many an intellectual in Cameroon to focus on political assignments at the expense of research and to strive at publishing regime-tilted works. In spite of the fact that his assertions acknowledge some unnamed exceptions, we find them largely faulty and unfounded. Consequently, this paper embarks on a mission of refuting his allegations and proving that Cameroonian university intellectuals—both learned professors and their mentees (like the case of this present author)—do publish scholarly works in national and international channels. With evidence from the CVs of some Cameroon professors randomly culled from Internet sources, with reference to some national journals and annals managed in Cameroon, with reference to some randomly selected papers by Cameroonian intellectuals obtained via Google Scholar, Academia.edu, Researchgate and Selectedworks, and with citations from diverse academic publications, the present paper attempts to somewhat neutralise Nwaco's assertions. In order to balance our arguments, the paper also identifies weaknesses in academic publishing in Cameroon and proposes strategies to remedy the situation.

Keywords: *Academic Publishing, Cameroon, Scholarly Publishing Challenges in Cameroon, Cameroonian Academics Publish, Scholarship in Cameroon/Africa*

This paper is an attempt to refute NwanatifuNwaco's claims that Cameroonian professors/academics are not committed to scholarly publishing. In short, he claims that Cameroon professors do not carry academic research. In a blog post captioned "Cameroon: Professors without Publications", Nwaco purports that Cameroon academics—university professors and doctors—largely do not produce and/or publish scholarly works such as research papers, book chapters, and monographs. His claims are principally based on the unavailability of titles and abstracts by Cameroon professors in his Google searches. He also alludes—rightly and/or wrongly—to the partisan politics that compels many an intellectual in Cameroon to focus on political assignments at the expense of research and to strive at publishing regime-tilted works. In spite of the fact that his assertions acknowledge some unnamed exceptions, we find them largely faulty and unfounded. Consequently, this paper embarks on a mission of refuting his allegations and proving that Cameroonian university intellectuals—both learned professors and their mentees (like the case of this present author)—do publish scholarly works in national and international channels. No matter how debatable this may be, with evidence from the CVs of some Cameroon professors randomly culled from Internet sources, with reference to some national journals and annals managed in Cameroon, with reference to some randomly selected papers by Cameroonian intellectuals obtained via Google scholar, Academia.edu, Researchgate and Selectedworks and with citations from diverse academic publications, the present paper neutralises Nwaco's assertions. In order to balance our arguments, the paper also identifies weaknesses in academic publishing in Cameroon and proposes strategies to remedy

the situation. It is worth noting that the words professors, scholars and academics are used interchangeably throughout this work to designate university intellectuals, both university lecturers and research students in generic terms.

Cameroon Professors Publish: A Case Against Academic Marginalities

The focus of this segment of the paper is to contradict and neutralise NwanatifuNwaco's (baseless) claims, which claims constitute an attempt to marginalise Cameroonian scholars. In order to do so, evidence is drawn from diverse sources. Publication information from web-traced curriculum vitae (CVs) of some randomly selected Cameroonian scholars constitutes the first set of evidence. Some publishing outlets owned by and where many Cameroonian academics publish are also brought to the fore. Evidence from specialized online searching sites for academic publications such as Google Scholar, Researchgate, Academia.edu and Selectedworks is also used. Finally, the academic mobility of Cameroonian scholars is equally proven to be indicative of the quality and quantity of scholarly publications by Cameroon professors.

A random sample of the web-based CVs of some selected Cameroonian scholars reveals the qualitative and quantitative nature of publications from Cameroon. The reputation of the peer-reviewed journals and publishing houses where these scholars publish as well as the number and depth of their works are quite impressive. Consider the following table which summarises findings from the random sample. This sample includes Cameroon university academics in all ranks and from diverse fields of knowledge as well as research students working under them. The entries in the table have been organised in alphabetical order.



Scholar	Affiliation	Academic Rank	No. of publications and year considered	Names of Prominent Journals and/or Publishing Houses
Christian Lambert Nguena	University of Yaoundé 2	Lecturer in Economics	13 research publications and 4 works in progress by 2013	<i>African Development Review, Economics Bulletin, African Journal of Economics</i>
Erasmus Nchuaji Tang	University of Yaoundé 1	Research Student in Biochemical Sciences	02 research papers and 02 works in progress by 2015	<i>International Journal of Biological and Chemical Sciences</i>
Godlove Ngwochu Hongie	University of Douala	Senior Lecturer in Political History and International Relations	11 research publications and 04 works in progress by 2015	<i>Sociology Study; Online Journal of African Affairs; International Journal of Education, Humanities and Multidisciplinary Research; the Journal of Social Sciences and Public Policy</i>
Justina Atemajongepse Njika	University of Yaoundé 1 and ENS Yaoundé	Associate Professor of English Language and Linguistics	14 research publications and 04 book reviews by 2014	<i>South Journal of Culture and Development, Ibadan Journal of Multicultural/Multidisciplinary Studies, LAPEES, Studies in African Linguistics and Cuvillier Verlag.</i>
Kenneth Toah Nsah	Lycée de Monatélé II and University of Yaoundé 1	Research Student in Language, Culture and Literary Studies	02 research publications and 02 works in progress by 2015	<i>Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture (JELLiC), Modern Research Studies: An International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences</i>
Oscar C. Labang	Kencholia Teacher Training College, St Lawrence University, Cameroon	Instructor/Lecturer in English, Didactics of National Languages and Cultures	????	<i>Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture (JELLiC), Epasa Moto: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Arts, Letters and the Humanities of the University of Buea, Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture, The Apollonian: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies</i>
Roger Mbihbihi Niying	Pan-African University Institute for Social and Human Sciences	Research Student in International Relations, Governance and Democracy	20 research papers and 02 works in progress by 2016	<i>International Journal of Advances in Social Science and Humanities</i>
Rose LEKE née Gana Fomban	University of Yaoundé 1	Professor of Medicine	70 research publications by 2012	<i>New England Journal of Medicine, The Journal of Infectious Diseases, Journal of Clinical Microbiology</i>
Samuel N. Atechi	University of Yaoundé 1	Professor of English Language and Linguistics	15 publications and 05 works in progress by 2013	<i>English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature, Alizes, Cuvillier Verlag, Cambridge Scholars Publishing,</i>

The research findings in the table above prove that Cameroonian scholars and their students are committed to scholarly research and publishing. The above findings are further strengthened by other statistics. Daniel Rotic (2010:3), quoting Thompson Scientific as of May 2007, reports that Cameroon academics produced a total of 2150 publications between the years 2000 and 2007. Ezra Ondari-Okemwa (2007:7), also quoting Thompson Scientific as of May 2007, reveals that Cameroonian scholars produced a total of 2718 publications between 1997 and 2007.

Furthermore, Cameroonian scholars equally run and publish in many commendable publishing channels. They publish academic “trash” (See Labang, 2012: n.p.) as well as literary works. Their publishing channels include online magazines or e-zines like Bakwa Magazine at <http://www.bakwamagazine.com/>; blogs such as Cameroon Literature in English at <http://www.anglocamlit.blogspot.com/>, Scribbles from the Den (<http://www.dibussi.com/>), Batuo’s World (<http://www.joyceash.com/>), George Ngwane (<http://www.gngwane.com/>), La Bang (<http://www.la-bang.org/>), Nsah Mala’s Literary Creations at <http://www.nсахmala.blogspot.com/>; peer-reviewed open access journals and university annals like the *Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture (JELLiC)*, the *Journal of Human Rights (JHR)*, *Syllabus Review: Human and Social Sciences Series* at the Higher Teacher Training College (ENS) at the University of Yaoundé, the *Cameroon Journal of Studies in the*

Commonwealth at the University of Douala, and *Epasa Moto: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Arts, Letters and the Humanities* at the University of Buea; and publishing houses like Langaa RPCIG, Miraclaire Publishing LLC, Miraclaire Academic Publications (MAP), Editions Clés, CEREK Publishing, ANUCAM Publishers, Unique Printers and Publishers, Spears Media Press, Afrédit, NMI Education, Ken Scholars Publishing (USA), Cambridge Scholars Publishing (UK), Galda Verlag (Germany), Cuvillier Verlag (Germany), etc.

One of the basis on which Nwaco indicts Cameroon professors is his claim that a Google search with some names of these professors yield little or no results. However, in order to land on good and specialized search results online, one has to use specialized search engines. The *Search Engine List* can be helpful in this regard. With regard to Google, advanced search through Google Scholar provides much better results on scholarly publications in the form of books, book chapters, research papers and essays. For example, the search terms like “Cameroon”, “Cameroonian scholars”, and various names of Cameroonian academics yields substantial information about the number and reputation of the international peer-reviewed journals in which Cameroon researchers publish their works. Such journals include *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal (ASSRJ)*, *Intersections, Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, Nordic Journal of African Studies, Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, International Journal of English and Education, Modern Research Studies, BARNOLIPI—An Interdisciplinary*



Journal, CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, The Apollonian, to name but these.

We can also argue that academic mobility for higher education teachers/lecturers which comes with the internationalization of education is a big plus for academic publishing in Cameroon. Cameroon professors residing and working either permanently or temporarily in foreign countries now, more than ever before, maintain continuous and collaborative research ties with their peers back at home. This is the case with academics like Oscar Labang, Charles Teke, Francis Nyamjoh, Joyce Ashuntantang, Bill F. Ndi, IrmagardAnchangLangmia, KhebumaLangmia, Peter Vakunta, Jerry Domatob, DibussiTande, Juliana Nfah-Abeny aka Makuchi, George Eshu, AugustinSimoBobda, Joseph BabilaMutia, Gilbert Ndi Shang, etc. In the present global context, no professor has a permanent base due to intellectual/academic mobility. Collaborative research initiatives undertaken by these roving scholars and their home-based colleagues greatly add to the quality and quantity of research publications by Cameroon professors.

Conference and symposia proceedings in Cameroon are equally published. That is the case for conferences like the KITAL/CELLA annual international conferences, symposia and festschrifts in honour of retiring professors like those that were held between 2005 and 2014 at the University of Yaoundé in honour of retiring professors Bole Butake, Beban Sammy Chumbo, Paul Bangwana, V. K. J. Fanso, etc. No Smoke Without Fire: Issues that Taint Cameroonian Professors' Research

This section of the paper argues that despite the above potentials and viability of scholarly publishing in Cameroon, the country's academics suffer from so many problems which tend to hamper and/or taint the image of their research publications. This results to academic marginalities. Among the many issues stifling academic research in Cameroon (and even Africa/developing world at large), we can cite publishing hurdles/conundrums, limited online presence of university annals and journals, absence of student journals within Cameroonian universities, limited funding/lack of incentives, and little or no collaborative vertical research projects among Cameroonian academics. Each of these problems will be considered in turn.

Publishing Conundrums in Africa and Cameroon

Many researchers have demonstrated that Africa including Cameroon suffers from many academic publishing limitations (see Samuel S. Esseh and John Willinsky, n.d.; Ezra Ondari-Okemwa, 2007; and OghenetegaIvwighregheghweta and Oghenovo K. Onoriode, 2012). Restricted copyrights and access, lack of infrastructure to host open access publications, low literacy levels, little institutional motivation of scholars and research students to contribute to open access materials, poverty, and lack of appropriate technology tools are some of these major conundrums/huddles to scholarly publishing

in Africa, and Cameroon. With regards to poverty for example, Ivwighregheghweta and Onoriode (2012), drawing from DiMaggio et al., hold that "digital divide refers to inequalities in access to the Internet, extent of use, knowledge of search strategies, quality of technical connections and social support, ability to evaluate the quality of information, and diversity of uses" (p.6). Ezra Ondari-Okemwa (2007), insightfully elaborates the technological limitations that hamper scholarly publishing in the continent. He contends that

Scholarly publishing in sub-Saharan African countries [including Cameroon] could benefit from electronic publishing but the countries in the region lack the technological capability to support electronic knowledge transfer and scholarly publishing..The technological challenges in sub-Saharan Africa are similar to those across the African region. Ahwireng-Obeing (2000) thinks that Africa is a 'technological wilderness', peripheral to the knowledge revolution, the convulsive impact of which is only felt in the continent. (n.p.)

Cameroon is thus part of the African "technological wilderness" struggling with publishing obstacles. Furthermore, the Cameroon-born poet Nsah Mala has also explored the difficulties faced by writers (and researchers) in Cameroon in the poem "Publishing Conundrum" published in his most recent poetry collection *If You Must Fall Bush*. It is worth quoting the said poem in its entirety:

Bites of I[s]anity's birth certificate

Was signed at Langaa maternity

On February 12, 2015;

But her father only embraced the baby

At home on April 28, 2015,

After a long, long "on attend l'enfant".

How long shall this continue?

That we conceive children in Cameroon

And cannot be delivered in local maternities.

Where are our Cameroonian literary midwives?

Perhaps Ashuntantang's call fell on stone ears;

We keep owning foreign children conceived here.

Our land is blessed with literary fertility,

But sometimes our pregnancies are overdue

And someone elsewhere begets a child similar to ours.

Then we are accused of literary fornication and adultery.

Our midwives chase shadows of textbooks and booklists

While foreigners name our kids and decide their shapes...

How long shall this publishing conundrum continue? (p.4)

Some reviewers have already underscored publishing hurdles explored in Mala's work and experienced in his Cameroonian society. Michael SuhNiba, in the foreword to the collection, opines that

“...unfortunately Cameroonian authors [and researchers] have a problem because they do not have publication channels. In most cases their works take so much time to be published so much so that they are accused of plagiarism which the poet creatively terms the accusation of ‘adultery and fornication’. Those involved in publishing in Cameroon only care about producing textbooks for the syllabus thereby marginalising creative writers [and researchers]. This sense of frustration which Mala expresses is a sentiment that other Cameroonian writers like Joyce Ashuntantang and Oscar Labang have also explored.” (pp. xvii-xviii)

Similarly, Louisa Lum, in the afterword of the same collection, affirms that “There is also a focus on the difficulty of publication by Cameroonian authors [and researchers] since most local publishers prefer to publish textbooks that will sell in the national school system” (p. 107). According to the above excerpts, the high preference that most Cameroon local publishers give to textbooks is detrimental to creative and scholarly publishing and consequently causes the marginalisation of the latter works, particularly academic research findings. In short, the list of hurdles to academic publishing in Africa is far from being exhaustive. Some of the issues left out here will feature in some of the discussions that follow.

Limited Online Presence of Cameroonian University Annals and Journals

University annals, bulletins and journals in African as a whole and in Cameroon in particular are not sufficiently visible on the digital space where the entire world converges into a one small global village. Ezra Ondari-Okemwa (2007) affirms that “Scholarly publications emanating from sub-Saharan Africa and the entire African continent lack [offline and online] visibility” (n.p.). In Cameroon specifically, internal scholarly publications such as annals, journals and students’ dissertations are almost nowhere to be found on the World Wide Web. With the exception of ENS Yaoundé which publishes outstanding student dissertations on their website at www.ens.cm, one cannot download a Masters or PhD thesis/dissertation from the website of any university on Cameroon, at least at the time of writing this paper. Apart from *Syllabus Review: Human and Social Sciences Series* and *Epasa Motto: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Arts, Letters and the Humanities of the University of Buea*—which have open-access online versions, no Cameroonian university, at the time this paper was researched and written, can boast of a journal issue found online. In this vein, Daniel Rotich (2010) contends as follows:

The most pressing problem is the need to maintain the technology for traditional printing in scholarly publishing while at the same time investing in and developing a new system that relies on digital creation, transmission and distribution. The costs of doing both things simultaneously are enormous, both to scholarly publishers and to research

libraries. The presence of the Internet in sub-Saharan Africa is extremely low. This has made Africa lag behind in terms of scholarly publishing. There is also a need to build the capacity of editors and designers. Access to ICT facilities is also a pressing need for most publishing institutions. (p.5)

Probably, the lack of proper technological capacities to deal with electronic publishing, as shown above, is responsible for the online invisibility of scholarly publications from Cameroon and sub-Saharan Africa. In like manner, Ivwighregheghweta and Onoriode (2012) quote Hamsel (2005) as having stated that

[T]echnologically, many African countries, especially Nigeria, lack the infrastructure to handle OA materials. Telecommunication challenges like bandwidth allocation, and weak communication and social infrastructure have not only blocked information flows but ultimately stifled social and economic development. Internet connection is a key to OA. Despite a very rapid rate of the Internet growth, Africa still lags behind in Internet connectivity with barely 1% of Internauts in Africa and the Middle East. Scientists who are not connected to the Internet are excluded automatically from publishing in, and benefiting from, a growing number of journals, because many new journals are created online while many old ones now often have online counterparts. (p. 6)

Thus, Cameroonian institutions of higher learning and the state authorities (seem to) lack the basic technological infrastructure to make their publications available on the virtual space. To this, one can also add the fact that most university annals and journals in Cameroon are not published at regular frequencies/intervals. Sometimes, a university goes for more than two years without releasing an issue of its annals or journal(s).

Absence of Student Journals in Cameroonian Universities

In the western world (Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, etc.), universities have student/internal journals within their various schools, faculties, and departments. They sometimes even have specialized journals for graduate (postgraduate) and undergraduate students in order to enable students to get acquainted with academic research while still studying. Examples of such journals include *Aidenn: The Liberty Undergraduate Journal of American Literature* (Liberty University), *Best Integrated Writing* (Wright State University), *Nota Bene: Canadian Undergraduate Journal of Musicology* (Western University), (See Students Journals Published with Digital Commons at <http://digitalcommons.bepress.com/online-journals-student/>, retrieved on 24 March 2016), *The Hilltop Review: A Journal of Western Michigan University* (Western Michigan University, at <http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/hilltopreview/>), *New Vistas Journal* (University of West London, at <http://www.uwl.ac.uk/research/new-vistas-journal/>, retrieved on 24 March 2016), *Canadian Graduate Journal of Sociology and Criminology* (University of Waterloo, at [56 | Voice of Research, Vol. 5 Issue 2, September 2016, ISSN 2277-7733](https://uwaterloo.ca/sociology-</p>
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and-legal-studies/canadian-graduate-journal-sociology-and-criminology/, retrieved on 24 March 2016) and *McGill Sociological Review* (McGill University, at <https://www.mcgill.ca/msr/mcgill-sociological-review-msr/>, retrieved on 24 March 2016). Sadly enough, these types of journals do not yet exist in universities in Cameroon and most sub-Saharan African countries. At a time when Open Access publishing is en vogue, it is regrettable that such research facilities do not exist in Cameroonian universities. It is perhaps due to this sad situation that it is so rare to find a university student in Cameroon (both undergraduate and graduate students) who publishes papers in national and international peer-reviewed journals while still studying. The author of the present paper is one of those rare research students in Cameroon who is publishing in peer reviewed journals! Besides the absence of student academic works in such journals, Cameroonian students are also deprived of the merits that come with such endeavours. Julie Hagan (2014: n.p.) cite the following as the value/merits of research students enjoy from publishing in student journals: improving your writing style, becoming an effective peer reviewer, building leadership skills, broadening your network, and encouraging idea sharing.

Insignificant Research Allowances/Lack of Research Incentives

The lack of research incentives is an acute academic problem in most African universities, especially universities in sub-Saharan Africa where Cameroon belongs. Even Nwaco acknowledges this limitation when he states that “Most will be quick to blame the small or limited research grants offered by the state for research or are quick to accuse censorship...” (n.p.). He also evokes another obstacle to academic publishing in Cameroon which is state censorship of anti-regime research findings. Relatedly, Ezra Ondari-Okemwa (2007), in a lengthy but comprehensive and comprehensible manner, stresses the fact that lack of incentives deters African scholars from publishing. He holds that

Research funding is almost non-existent; many universities in the region have seen enrollment of students escalating while emoluments of faculty members and researchers have remained stagnant over a long period of time. Scholars publish for several reasons and one of the major reasons is that of earning promotions and tenure. However, good incentives can also persuade scholars to publish in scholarly journals. Institutions of higher learning in sub-Saharan Africa, which are the major employers of scholars in the region, do not provide incentives to scholars to publish in scholarly journals... Good remuneration and other monetary rewards for scholars are incentives, but there are other incentives which can create an enabling environment for scholarly publishing. For example, maintaining the best infrastructure that institutions of higher learning should have and maintaining the prestige and comfort associated with higher education can be an important incentive for

scholars in sub-Saharan Africa. Such incentives can enable scholars not only to desire to publish, but also to add to the body of knowledge. Sabbatical leave, which is meant to ensure that scholars have time and attention for research and interaction with their counterparts from other regions of the world, is not easily facilitated in the institutions of learning based in sub-Saharan Africa. The reason for the absence of all these incentives is lack of adequate financing. (n.p)

Limited research allowances also prevent Cameroonian and other sub-Saharan African scholars from attending academic conferences in and outside their countries. Commenting on the importance of these conferences and why African (and Cameroonian) scholars hardly attend them, Ezra Ondari-Okemwa (2007) writes that

In conferences, scholars have an opportunity to present their research findings to their peers, especially those from other regions of the world. These research findings may eventually be published either as conference proceedings or as articles in scholarly journals. Scholars in sub-Saharan Africa find it too costly to sponsor themselves to such conferences and their institutions do not usually give any support. Even conferences organized locally or within the region are out of reach for most scholars in sub-Saharan Africa. (ibid)

The more African and Cameroonian universities cut down and/or feel reluctant to provide adequate research funding and allowances to their professors and students, the more the quality and quantity of academic research from this part of the world will be invisible, marginalised and underestimated on the global academic landscape. This problem is further compounded by the advent of Open Access publishing which in most cases (for now) compels many journals to charge author fees (processing and publishing fees) from the authors of articles and papers. Here it is worth alluding to the personal experiences of the present author in this regard. In 2015, his second published research paper entitled “Black Prophecies on Whites Soils and Ears: A Reading of Joyce Ashuntantang’s ‘The Clairvoyant’” was accepted for publication by two reputable international peer-reviewed journals (one in the UK and another in Germany) which however failed to publish the paper because he could not raise the fees charged him for its publication. Fortunately, another reputable peer-reviewed journal in India accepted and published the paper without charging him any processing/publication fee.

Little or No Vertical Collaborative Research Projects among Cameroonian Academics

One of the factors that cast shadows of invisibility and marginality on Cameroon academic publishing is the near total absence of collaborative research initiatives among scholars in Cameroon, particularly what the present researcher dares call vertical collaborative research—that is, collaborative research between senior and junior professors/lecturers and/or between professors and students. As hinted earlier in this

paper, there are very few university students in Cameroon involved in academic research and publishing other than their chosen research topics for thesis/dissertations. There is also very limited or insufficient research cooperation between Cameroon-based researchers and researchers in the North (developed countries). In this regard, Ezra Ondari-Okemwa (2007) notes that

It takes a collaborative effort to produce knowledge. Scholars in the developed regions who may buy the idea of collaborating and/or co-publishing with their peers from sub-Saharan Africa should do so bearing in mind the challenges of scholarly publishing in the region. It should be clear that scholars in Africa do not have access to information resources, taken for granted in many countries of the developed regions. It should also be understood that information technologies are largely absent in sub-Saharan Africa. If scholars in the developed world think that no worthy scholarship may come out of Africa, then the appeals to collaborate and co-publish may be like preaching to the wilderness. (n.p.)

In the above excerpt, Okemwa spells out precautions that have to be taken each time that South-North research cooperation is to be embarked upon. In this way, he identifies technological loopholes in research in Africa, including Cameroon, at the same time launching an implicit appeal for such initiatives to be carried out. Thus, the present author joins him to recommend that there senior and junior academics as well as academics and their students/mentees should endeavour to carry out collaborative research in Cameroon.

Extinguishing the Fire: The Way Forward for Academic Publishing in Cameroon

Considering the shortcomings identified in academic publishing in Cameroon (and Africa) above, we need to formulate suggestions aimed at redressing the situation in order to make our research findings much more visible both online and offline, in and out of the country. We therefore recommend, to all stakeholders in the area of academic research and publishing in Cameroon, as follows: More and more journals and annals should be created in Cameroonian universities. The periodicity of publications in these journals and/or annals should be made on very regular basis. While creating these journals, attention should be paid to Open Access demands, especially online archiving and indexing so that works published therein will be freely available and accessible online. OA publishing requires that published academic works be freely accessible to readers and users throughout the world and at all times thanks to internet depositories and free downloading options. Intra-university journals should be created, especially student journals for both graduate and undergraduate students in order to initiate students to research early enough. University presses or publishing units in the departments of our various

universities should be created and sustained. The Cameroon government needs to step up research allowances for university lecturers and to provide enough funding to research students. Universities should also be allowed enough autonomy so that they can forge profitable partnerships with the private sector and secure funding sources for research scholars and students within their various faculties and departments. The powers that be should encourage university professors in Cameroon to attend academic conferences. Ondari-Okemwa (2007) strongly proposes that “Institutions of higher learning in the [sub-Saharan African] region should do everything possible to enable scholars to attend conferences organized locally, regionally and internationally. Attendance of such conferences allows scholars to understand the current paradigms in their various areas of research” (n.p.). Ivwighregheghweta and Onoriode (2012) add that “OA increases the return on their investment in research, making the results of the funded research more widely available, more discoverable, more retrievable, and more useful. OA serves public funding agencies by providing public access to the results of publicly funded research” (p.4). The organization of academic gatherings such as conferences, seminars, festschrifts and symposia should be encouraged in Cameroon. The KITAL/CELLA example should be emulated. Meanwhile, professors should be encouraged to attend such gatherings and other conferences outside the country. In this vein, it should be added that Cameroon’s participation (through Cameroonian scholars) in international academic conferences such as the African Literature Association (ALA) in the literary field should be improved. That is why Cameroonian literary scholars and research students need to take advantage of the competitive travel grants and free students membership options offered by the ALA in order to increase their participation in ALA events. Collaborative research, particularly vertical collaborative research, should be encouraged and effectively practised among Cameroon academics. Senior researchers should initiate book projects and issue Calls for Papers so that junior researchers and research students may take advantage and train themselves in the art and science of research. Each time a book project is undertaken necessitating open calls for papers, the information should be circulated as widely as possible. Passing across such information on social media like Facebook and Yahoo groups, via email and in hard copy letters etc. can really enable many academics to participate. The powers that be should make sure that the journals they create are open access in nature and try as much as possible to avoid charging author fees in order not to deter poor researchers from sharing their research findings. Our OAJs should raise funds in different ways like donations from sponsors and others. Similarly, efforts should be made by well-informed academics in Cameroon to share information about OAJs in various research fields which do not charge author fees. This will enable many Cameroonian scholars to



publish since they are usually unable to pay author fees to internationals due to poverty and even modes of payment like online payment.

Conclusion

This paper has refuted NwanatifuNwaco's claims that Cameroon professors do not publish research findings. It used evidence from randomly selected web-traced CVs of some Cameroon professors, examined some of the journals and publishing houses in which they publish, discussed how specialized searching techniques on the internet do yield research publications from Cameroon, and also cited seminal works on scholarly publishing in Africa in order to defend the thesis that Cameroon professors and some of their students are very committed to academic research and publishing. However, the paper also identified and discussed some of the issues that plague academic publishing in Cameroon and Africa such as limited funding/lack of incentives, technological weaknesses, absence of student journals, and limited collaboration between researchers. These issues were raised to prove that despite everything scholarly publishing in Cameroon and Africa is still standing on shaky grounds, though it is fallacious to claim that Cameroon professors do not publish. In the last part of the paper, recommendations have been made aimed at improving the quality, quantity and visibility of scholarly publications from Cameroon in particular and Africa/the developing world at large. These recommendations include the need for the creation of more journals and annals in Cameroon, the need to make such journals open access in nature, the need for more incentives to be provided for academics to attend conferences, the need to promote and encourage collaborative research among scholars in Cameroon, among others. If these recommendations are effectively implemented coupled with commendable initiatives like the KITAL/CELLA annual conferences and the progressive integration of ICTs in the management of Cameroonian universities and other higher institutions of learning, we can then be sure that the future looks bright for scholarly publishing in Cameroon and Africa. And this bright future lies on the shoulders of open access publishing and online archiving which Daniel Rotich (2010) acknowledges as being "of vital importance to developing countries [such as Cameroon], which often do not have the capital necessary to access scholarly literature" (n.p.). It is our wish that this paper contributes toward achieving this bright future of academic publishing in Cameroon (and in Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole).

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