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Justice and the Dynamics of Research and Publication in Africa: Interrogating the Performance of ´Publish or Perish´

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Introduction

Speaking from a global stance, Boyer decries how universities have become "a place where students get credentialed and faculty get tenured, while the overall work of the academy does not seem particularly relevant to the nation's most pressing needs" (2003, p.145). In his view, the university is supposed to be a critical partner in trying to search for answers to pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems. Universities should not be islands of affluence and self-importance in seas of poor living conditions, violence, and despair. Boyer's call strikes an even louder cord when we focus on African academia.

Thirty-three years ago, when the famous African novelist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was asked what he thought the role of the African writer was, his response was that they had to put their intellectual resources to the service of the masses. This would involve ensuring that whatever they articulate was in line with the needs and struggles of their people. He went further to say that;

> ... if you [the African intellectual] were to accurately describe, and accurately take the position of the struggling masses, this would inevitably lead you to a choice of options as to where to work, with whom to work, whether to work with the masses or with those exploiting the masses and so on. So I think that step of accurately reflecting the needs of the struggling masses is very, very important and can guide the intellectual in his [her] choice of actions (1985, p.20).

In this line, it is crucial to ask ourselves what the African academics' choice of actions should be in their role of producing and disseminating knowledge. This invites more questions: What kind of knowledge should the African academic generate? What should be the role/purpose of this knowledge? How should this knowledge be disseminated for it to meet its purpose? Relatedly, Anyidoho (2006) has asked if there should be a link between location and scholarship, between belonging and knowledge production, between identity and representation. As he notes, although these have been perennial questions in African studies, they are not the kind we can afford to dismiss as we look back over the state of knowledge production about Africa, in order to chart new and more meaningful courses. This is especially the case because, although the questions and concerns are old (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o *Ibid.*), as we shall demonstrate here, the realities they question are continually complicated by new developments in global relations and in the politics of knowledge. Thus, every generation is required to confront the challenges in lieu of its particular circumstances.

It has been variously observed that, for a number of reasons, the contribution of African academics to both 'science' and social science is quite little and peripheral (King 2004; Mweru 2010). Sithole (2010) and Connell (2014) note that in the global knowledge economy, labour is divided in such a way that the role of the periphery to which the African academy belongs is to supply data and later apply the knowledge generated elsewhere from such data. On the other hand, in addition to producing data, the role of the metropole is to collate and process data to draw out theories and methodologies – which are then exported to the periphery. Unfortunately, even for the little that is produced, a paucity of it is for local consumption/use (Nyamnjoh 2004; Matthews 2010). This way, Africa is treated as "a tropical laboratory to test and refine the methodological and theoretical frameworks of the disciplines" (Zeleza 1997, p.195). Reduced to data sources, the local community has largely been excluded from benefiting from the knowledge generated by African academics since the international 'publish or perish' culture has hardly been tailored to local socio-economic and cultural circumstances.

Certainly, there are some exceptional academics and universities that use their knowledge and expertise to actively engage in community activities/outreach, public discourse, and policy advocacy work; but, seen against the overall population of universities and academics, these are few and scattered, thus leaving a lot to be desired. Partly due to the fact that their ideas sometimes take long to be appreciated/implemented and that their nature makes it difficult to specifically point to their impact; but also due to other operational omissions, the social sciences and humanities reflect more of this problem. It is on the basis of such uncomfortable observations that it is felt that:

> ... the African intelligentsia seems to have fundamentally failed its Motherland ... in providing practical solutions to the continent's problems. My argument is that an intelligentsia class that has largely proved more pre-occupied with servicing its elitist interests and lifestyles rather than finding practical means of resolving Africa's problems should be highly self-critical (Mugo 2004, p.28).

Whereas the above state of affairs has often been critiqued in the perspective of the political economy (and politics) of knowledge production, we argue that these are fundamentally questions of research ethics, particularly research justice. This we argue with the normative aid of southern theory plus other theories of social and distributive justice. In our view, this makes the need for adjustment in the African knowledge production sector more compelling.

The chapter starts by explaining why African academics behave the way they do – which is meant to provide ground for our concerns on justice. We then delve into explication of normative perspectives on southern theory and other theories of justice. This is followed by presentation and analysis of documentary and empirical findings, mainly from qualitative interviews with female academics at Makerere University (public) and Uganda Martyrs University (private). Particularly, we shall illustrate that, due to some contextual gender dynamics (especially in division of labour) that as well manifest in higher education (Ssentongo 2010; Cornell 2014), the structure and performance of the 'publish or perish' tradition disadvantages African female scholars even much more than their male counterparts.

In lieu of research justice, it is argued here that publication of knowledge should not only be contextual but also accessible and relevant to the target audience. We argue that the 'impact factor' is most importantly how knowledge influences attitudes and practice of the target audience. It could be difficult to establish attitudinal change, but it is on the operationalisation of such change and of improvement in capabilities of local communities that we should put key focus if African academics are to be of (more) relevance to their locales. This is not to say that academics would be solely and/or always responsible for using their research to bring about social change, more so in the immediate. There are certainly many other players such as government, civil society, and university organs that should endeavour to make use of knowledge generated by academics. The idea is that academics should make their findings accessible and, in some possible cases, engage in research (such as action research) that by its nature involves social transformation.

Dynamics of research, publication, and local relevance in African academia

In order to re-imagine justice in research and publication among African academics, it is important to first understand the drivers and dynamics of research and publication among African academics. The dynamics discussed in this section bring into question the notion of globalisation and raise more attention to postcolonial theory to help us "... understand the broad legacies of colonialism, the contemporary international structures that tend to reinforce the colonial legacies and asymmetrical relationships, as well as their consequences and dynamics" (Omeje 2015, p.4).

Around the 1990s, globalisation, viewed as increased contact and exchange beyond national and continental borders, was euphorically idealised as a way of gradually ironing out the economic differences between different communities (Stiglitz 2007; Conversi 2010). Following this ideal and for other hegemonic reasons, there has been increased contact, interaction, and transactions between different parts of the world. In the education sector, North-South inter-university collaborations have significantly increased over time. Whereas this development has yielded some benefits in the education sector on both poles, critics have also noted that there is overwhelming evidence that it has failed to live up to its potential due to the way it is managed – especially due to failure in checking power imbalances and their resultant injustices.

> The rules of the game have been largely set by advanced industrial countries [institutions] ... and, not surprisingly, they have shaped globalisation to further their own interests. They have not sought to set a fair set of rules, l*et al.*one a set of rules that would promote the well-being of those in the poorest countries of the world (Stiglitz 2007, p.4).

In this sense, globalisation carries within its praxis elements that are contrary to the spirit of pluralism, which we think should direct the meeting of diverse groups. Pluralism constitutes "... an ideology and system that accepts diversity as a positive value and facilitates constant negotiations and adjustments among varieties of difference without seeking or expecting to terminate any or all of them permanently" (An-na'im 2008, p.225). On the contrary, as seen above, north-south relations in academia tend to operate in an epistemologically assimilative fashion orchestrated through financial patronage. As Connell (2011; 2014) has called it, it is 'quasi-globalisation'.

The dynamics of globalisation interact with postcoloniality to produce a complex phenomenon that helps us understand the alienation of academics from their communities in postcolonial societies. As Omeje observes in *The Crises of Postcoloniality in Africa* (2015), postcoloniality is a widely equivocated and contested concept. We here adopt Pennycook's simple definition framing it as "the material state after the end of colonialism" (cited in Vavrus 2002, p.375). This state is viewed as an effect of both the legacies of colonialism and the machinations of neo-colonialism (Zeleza 2006). Pennycook's definition should be extended to include the psychological state so as to capture the mindsets that operate in former colonies as relics of colonial ideology. These mindsets are strong determinants of behaviour in post-colonies up to present. Hountondji (cited in Connell 2014) has for example observed that, due to colonial and postcolonial psychic effects, the attitude of intellectuals in the periphery is one of 'extraversion' – manifested through being oriented to sources of authority outside their own society. Most African countries bear characteristics that can be best understood by understanding the colonial policy of their former colonial masters and post-independence relations. For example, such analysis helps us understand the language policies of different countries and the hegemonic position of English.

Because many postcolonial societies are still in the process of building their education institutions and due to other internal weaknesses, the quality of their education is often low - thus most of their top academics are Western-trained - at least at tertiary level (Sinklair 2010). These are socialised into Western methodologies and approaches to university management, which they tend to reproduce back home with the effect of sidelining local epistemologies and failure to tailor their systems to local contexts. Postcoloniality is thus seen to produce and reproduce unjust relations reminiscent of the colonial system but within a hybrid structure that tends to veil or normalise its inherent injustices.

The key aspects to be discussed in the dynamics of research and publication in African academia that raise questions of justice are: Fitting into the global knowledge economy; promotion standards vis-à-vis perceptions on publication quality; and resource deprivation and the politics of research funding.

Fitting into the global knowledge economy

Many academics would wish their work to be respectable by international standards in the knowledge production and consumption field. To use Salager-Meyer's (2008) concept, many would want to be part of the 'global research village'. This comes with advantages such as easier access to promotion, research funding, and other big employment opportunities. However, to achieve the international academic status means playing by the rules of the game, which are largely determined/ defined by European and American universities and publishing houses. Regardless of the peculiar demands of their own context, scholars either abide/fit in, or else they are excluded and relegated to the periphery – 'defined out of existence'. Sardar rightly argues in 'Development and the locations of Eurocentrism' that:

> The real power of the West is not located in its economic muscles and technological might. Rather, it resides in the power to define. The West defines what is, for example, freedom, progress and civil behaviour; law, tradition and community; reason, mathematics and science; what is real and what it means to be human. The non-Western civilisations have simply to accept these definitions or be defined out of existence" (1999, p.44).

Many African scholars thus face a critical choice between sacrificing local relevance for recognition, or recognition for relevance. This is recognition in terms of gaining an international reputation in their disciplines, local relevance through rendering their research useful in their local context. The political economy of the publishing industry often prevents them from achieving both of these values at the same time (Nyamnjoh 2004).

For one to earn a reputation in the academic world, they should have published in internationally renowned journals and publication houses. This is what many African universities encourage (Nduhukire Owa-Mataze 2004). By extension, this also means that African scholars would have to meet the scholarly requirements of those publishers, sometimes including that they may have to frame their questions and methodologies in ways desirable by their outlets. Paradoxically, in some cases, such an arrangement has an effect that African scholars hardly attract attention because they lack in uniqueness and freshness (Mugo 2004). This way, in such cases, they neither write for home nor for the West – they write for the dump.

In trying to meet international standards, often local/indigenous knowledge systems and methodologies that do not fit into the former are the casualties. "Perspectives sympathetic with the predicaments of Africa have suffered a high rejection rate by university curricula, reviewers for publishers, and academic peers who stick to their conceptual and methodological spots however compelling arguments to the contrary have been" (Nyamnjoh 2004, p.345). This way, 'alien' approaches are delegitimised and pushed to the sidelines of knowledge. Where tolerated to an extent, such knowledge is patronisingly categorised as 'subjective immersion' in contrast to 'scientific/objective' knowledge (Sithole 2010).

A number of African writers that have ventured outside the orthodoxies of their disciplines have often had an uphill and draining task of proving the scholarly validity of their approaches and to withstand disciplinary suspicion plus denigration (Garuba 2010). For instance, there has been biased need to prove if there is African Philosophy - often vetted against the standards of Western Philosophy. The novel wanderings of the Kenyan philosopher Odera Oruka in the 1990s into studying 'sage philosophy' and 'ethno-philosophy' were met with tough resistance and exclusionary criticism both from African and Western philosophers. Critique as such is not a problem, but it appears that writers from the 'South' have a heavier burden of proof/validation for paradigms inspired by their local contexts. This is especially the case when using Western publication outlets that tend to use their own theoretical and methodological sieves. As such if one wants international recognition and its privileges, it would be unwise to delve into the 'doubted' epistemologies, wise to follow the Western frames.

Access to prestigious publication outlets also requires, among other standards, that one uses a language acceptable to them both in kind and flavour. In Uganda, as in most parts of the world today (Flowerdew 2008; Plonski *et al.* 2013), the major publication language is English. In Africa, this is largely a colonial legacy (Mkandawire 2005; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 2017). Brought up in a system that privileges/ rewards English and French more, whereas many African academics do their everyday communication and transaction in vernaculars, many can hardly write in them! Indeed, whereas more widely spoken, these local languages have acquired an inferior status with the idea that they are incapable of sustaining academic discourse and are therefore career-wise stagnating. These attitudes are so deeply entrenched in academic practice and a paradigm so difficult to change that even ideologically committed liberation scholars like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o who have tried to champion the cause of writing in native languages have often ended up backtracking on their promises. In *Decolonising the Mind* in 1987, Ngũgĩ declared to have switched from English to writing in Gikuyu and Kiswahili – and he did for a while. But, though he continues emphasising the importance of the shift, his practical one was not really sustained. This is largely due to structural setups that are very difficult to confront at individual level. The Ugandan poet Okot p´Bitek is an example of scholars that have been relatively successful in gaining credibility while writing in their native languages. But this has often come with the burden of subsequent translation for a wider audience. Indeed, it is the self-translated English version of Okot p´Bitek´s *Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol* (1989) that mainly established him. This illustrates the dilemmas inherent in the use of mother-tongue as a scholarly medium in Africa.

Writing in English is not helped by the complicated jargon-filled language of academic publications (Mugo 2004; Heleta 2016) and some degree of incapability in capturing some contextual aspects. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1987) shows that language is not only a means of communication but also a carrier of culture. Each language carries aspects of the culture of its origin. There is a closeness to local realities that is embodied in African vernaculars but elusive to foreign languages. Thus, despite its advantages in wider communication, the dominance of English as an academic medium of communication both sidelines the so many locals who may not access its vocabulary and prose and fails at capturing the sense of some distant vernaculars.

Considering that "only an elite few in Africa read in English" (Nyamnjoh 2004, p.332), the hegemony of English aggravates the phenomenon of academics speaking to themselves, their peers, and foreigners while excluding wider local communities (data sources) from their debates. For whereas some of the ´locals´ may also not be able to read their languages, at least it would be relatively easier for many to read their local languages than to read English (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 2017). This claim can be verified against urban-rural circulation statistics of English newspapers in Uganda as compared to vernacular ones like Bukedde, Orumuri, and Rupiny – especially in the native areas of each of the languages. We have observed that vernacular papers comparatively sell more in rural and semi-rural localities. Such scenarios in academics´ choice of publication language corroborate Ngũgĩ's view that "the choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire Universe" (*ibid.,* p.4).

On the other hand, academics without a masterly of English as a 'second language' are stigmatised and pushed to the academic sidelines. Here it is not only about knowing English, but 'which English'? Whereas many Africans can make a claim to speaking English, not all 'Englishes' are acceptable in academic writing. Mugane (2017) makes a helpful typology of 'horizontal' and 'vertical' English where he places all the various versions of English based on native/local accentuations and grammar different from the native (often standard) English under the horizontal category, and the latter vertical. Horizontal Englishes, which are widely used in the South, are not generally unwelcome in mainstream academic writing – except as objects of analysis or gaze.

Reviewers often treat speakers of English as a second language the same as native English speakers. In some cases, they have to work much more than their native counterparts to counteract the pessimistic quality doubts that often meet their submissions. Salager-Meyer (2008) and Flowerdew (2008) have showed that higher investment in language learning and additional costs of producing linguistically adequate work are additional tasks with which non-native speakers have to struggle. Masterly of a language is a strong determinant of the quality of arguments and attractiveness of academic output. It is not surprising that Coates (cited in Salager-Meyer 2008) found a correlation between bad writing and a high rejection rate and that, although many other factors could influence the rejection of a manuscript, poorly written articles often stand a lower chance of being accepted. Of course even if we are to write in African vernaculars there should be quality checks, but these would be easier to contextually relate with than when we have to translate our thoughts – sometimes into languages that can hardly convey certain meanings. It is then clear that, although helpful for cross-cultural communication, writing in non-native languages carries pervasive negative implications and questions of justice in African scholarly performance.

The idea that in academic life where one publishes matters a lot in smoothening or complicating their promotion process needs no introduction. Therefore, to put the above observations in proper context, it is helpful to place them in the dynamics of the politics of promotion in African universities which are both a product and shaper of the former.

Considerations for promotion

The most important consideration for academic promotion world-wide is publication. Community engagement has received increasing emphasis of late (Matthews 2010), but still ranks below publication. As Nyamnjoh (2004) observes, academics are increasingly aware that it is not enough simply to publish. More importantly, where one publishes matters a lot. Introduced in research in the 1960s (Dimitrov, Kaveri, and Bayry 2010), the impact factor measure of the importance of journal publications is picking significance in promotion dynamics in Africa. Increasingly, uncritically following international standards, African universities are privileging articles from 'high-impact-factor´ journals in promotion of academics. It is easier for an academic who has published in such journals to earn a promotion than those who publish in local journals and other local outlets. Incidentally, most high-impact-factor journals are from the West.

Most local journals' impact factor and citation frequency are rated so low, if at all (Salager-Meyer 2008). They face a number of sustainability challenges that are both a result of stereotypical contempt from academics plus promotion boards (Achebe 2000) and quality assurance flaws. These two factors mutually reinforce each other into rendering such publications invisible. Their readership, if any, hardly ever transcends the confines of their publication geo-spaces. Hungry for publication material yet desirous to keep running, they end up lowering their quality bar. Many senior academics use such journals for publishing (dumping) their less desirable or weaker work that they feel may not succeed or that has been rejected in high-impact-factor journals. Eventually many of them perish into academic limbo. Publishing in such journals is therefore considered a risk to one's promotion. If lucky to be promoted locally, there is still a risk of one's rank being non-transferable to 'international universities' where some academics may wish to relocate for greener pastures (De Waal 2016).

It may also be hard to attract funding from the West with a research portfolio dominated by publications in local journals. And because we have also built and internalised negative stereotypes about local journals, in countries like South Africa where they run a system of monetary rewards for publications, it is still reported that academics receive more funding for articles published in international/Western journals than in local journals (Heleta 2016). Besides the commodification of research inherent in the above practice, it also operates as a disincentive for using local publication outlets, which, ironically, are locally more accessible!

Because academic promotion almost entirely depends on publication, especially in journals, today academics find less importance in engaging in other forms of knowledge dissemination and public engagement. Many public calls for academics to stop only talking to themselves and their peers in peer-oriented jargon have thus not been heeded to (see Ssentongo -

*Who do African academics write for?;*Heleta – *Academics can change the world – if they stop talking only to their peers*). The promotion incentive structure is such that only those who out of personal commitment feel the need to engage the public on TV, radio, social media, and newspapers will do so, often sacrificing time that would be spent on career-rewarding publications.

Resource deprivation and the politics of research funding

With their inclination towards neoliberal administration and as a way of curbing intellectual criticism, very few African governments privilege academic research and, therefore, very little funding is allocated to the endeavour (Alemu 2014). Most of the research funds for African individual academics and institutions come from the West, which relations tend to reduce the options of the recipients and stand in the way of self-determination (Mugo 2004; Nduhukire Owa-Mataze 2004). It tends to result into a power configuration where research priorities, problems/agenda, and methods are often determined by the funding agencies hence crippling the agency of African scholars and sometimes undermining their local relevance (Mamdani 2007).

Even where there is collaboration on research projects between Northern and Southern universities/academics, it "... takes the form of western universities [academics] calling the tune for the African pipers they have paid" (Nyamnjoh 2004, p.346). In such a setting, due to the attractiveness of research funds, over time the relationship changes from one in which African individual academics and institutions are willing to accept unfairly conditional research funds to one in which they shape their activities in 'attractive' ways to win funding (Fasenfest 2010; Alemu 2014). This has resulted into what Nduhukire Owa-Mataze (2004) calls '*mercenary intellectualism'* – the financially motivated entry of African academics into preaching the gospel according IMF, World Bank, and other funding agencies more loudly than the funders themselves and with little or no regard for consequences on the former's local communities.

From the ensuing snapshot on the research and publication dynamics in African academia, what comes out vividly is that there is need to interrogate and re-imagine conceptions and application of justice in the field of scholarly research. Next, is a discussion on how justice is understood in research (research ethics) and some of the salient elements that need more emphasis as to address the injustices this paper raises. It is also our aim to render explicit some aspects of justice in research that are often held implicitly in research ethics discourse.

Normative Theoretical Perspectives on Research Justice

Questions about justice in research gravitate around distributive and social justice, especially in establishing: fairness in selecting respondents; equitable distribution of benefits and burdens of research participation; fairness in inclusion and exclusion; and issues around relevance to research communities (Kahn *et al.* 1998). Looping the above elements together, the understanding of justice in this paper broadly draws on Miller's conception of social justice as:

> ... how the good and bad things in life should be distributed among the members of a human society. When, more concretely, we attach some policy or some state of affairs as (being) socially unjust, we are claiming that a person, or more usually a category of persons, enjoys fewer advantages than that person or group of persons ought to enjoy (or bears more of the burdens than they ought to bear), given how other members of the society in question are faring (Miller, cited in Wilson-Strydom 2015, p.145).

This conception of justice is also echoed in Uganda´s *National Guidelines for Research Involving Humans as Research Participants* in whose definition justice means:

> … the ethical obligation to treat each person in accordance with what is morally right and proper, to give to each person what is due to him or her… [and] fair and equitable distribution of both burdens and

> benefits of participation in research (UNSCT[23] 2014, p.3).

Miller's definition helps identify the key aspects one should focus on in discerning whether there is justice or not. However, it leaves us with the task of explaining the basis of claims to/against the said fair/unfair distribution of advantages and burdens. We still have to establish: what makes distribution fair/ unfair?

The issue of justice as a special consideration came into prominence in research ethics literature with the release of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Bio-medical and Behavioral Research's *Belmont Report* (1979). This report and its preceding ethical guidelines such as the Nuremberg Code (1947) and the Declaration of Helsinki (1964) came out of concern over the gross injustices in research such as those seen in the Tuskegee Study on untreated syphilis among poor black men in USA and in the Nazi experiments gruesomely conducted on Jewish prisoners.

The Belmont Report thus mainly addressed itself to the question: 'Who ought to receive the benefits of research and bear its burdens?' According to this report that is inclined towards the Rawlsian view of justice as fairness, injustice occurs when some benefit to which a person is entitled is denied without good reason or when some undue burden is imposed on a person or community. It identifies five major formulations of ideals in distribution of burdens and benefits, that is: (1) to each person an equal share, (2) to each person according to individual need, (3) to each person according to individual effort, (4) to each person according to societal contribution, and (5) to each person according to merit. The report argues that it is unjust to use participants in a study which is meant to benefit a different group – especially if the study could be carried out on the benefitting group. The Kantian categorical imperative, specifically the formula of ends, is helpful here in its approbation of treating people as 'mere' means to others' ends.

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[23] Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

Here we should be emphatic on the issue of relevance of research to studied communities. Most studies and guidelines addressing the issue of relevance have put more attention on medical studies, especially clinical trials (Hawkins and Emmanuel 2008), often neglecting similar issues arising in social science and humanities research. Uganda´s national research ethics guidelines, for example, address the issue of access by requiring that researchers take "… measures to ensure easy access by the community *to the test drug/device, if proven beneficial*" (UNSCT 2014, p.2). How about benefitting from social research?

According to Anyidoho (2006), what is important when judging the relevance of a particular piece of research is how it relates to the local communities, as audiences, beneficiaries and agenda setters. This ideal contrasts with the earlier discussed dominant preoccupation among African scholars with how one should position oneself in relation to Western academic spaces (Beckman and Adeoti 2006; Alemu 2014). Social justice would require that local communities do not become *mere* sources of data – even for studies whose findings will neither ever improve their lives nor reach them.

Vulnerable categories of people should be given more attention here. It is easy to use people like the poor, the disabled, the mentally ill, minorities, and others with diminished autonomy for administrative convenience – which often involves adding more burden to an already burdened individual/group. The question of whether these people are going to benefit and if the benefits outweigh the risks should always be crucial. It certainly remains a challenge to weigh certain kinds of risks and benefits so as to be able to compare them. The Belmont Report does not address itself to this detail. Kahn *et al.* (*Ibid.*) also raised another important gap in the Report, that it puts most emphasis on inhibiting exploitation in research without detailed particular attention to participants' access to research and its potential benefits. This is one of the key justice concerns examined in this chapter.

Justice discourses could be broadly categorised into 'patterned conceptions' and 'libertarian conceptions' of justice (Powers 1998). Patterned conceptions of justice hold that a distribution of benefits, burdens, and risks is fair if it is in line with a pattern of distribution deemed ideal. We find typical examples in the egalitarian theories in which a distribution is just if the object of focus is equally allocated to those who have a justifiable claim to it or if it is in favor of the least advantaged. Classical libertarianism is mainly interested in the freedom/liberty for the individual. Here injustice arises when individuals are not allowed the freedom to choose what course of action to take basing on their own assessment of the risks and benefits involved (Nozick 1974). Freedoms of individuals should not be curtailed in prioritisation of the judgements of society or the benefit of society as a whole.

For the classical libertarian theorists, what we should pay attention to is the process through which we arrive at a particular distribution. It matters less that the outcome may not be to greater collective benefit of society. No matter how the ensuing patterns of distribution are, what is important is that individuals have freely chosen what they want. Hence you find much emphasis on informed individual consent in this approach. In our view, the problem of this approach is in its individualism that pays little attention to vulnerabilities – especially in Southern contexts. In societies under vulnerability from poverty and low levels of education/exposure, leaving issues of justice in research to mutual consent may result into terrible injustices. What appears to be free individual choice in consenting to participate in research may not really be free due to power imbalances.

In *Justice and the Politics of difference* (1990), Iris Marion Young faults the assumptions behind classical libertarianism's individualism. Similar to Mbiti's (1969) explanation of African society in the famous adage 'I am because we are, since we are therefore I am', Young argues that groups constitute the individual's notion of self. Accordingly, the unit of analysis should be at the level of the group and not at the level of the person/individual. Groups should be the most important unit of analysis because structural injustices often operate between groupings of people rather than individuals. This does not mean that individual interests are not important and should not be considered as a crucial factor for social justice, rather it is an acknowledgement that "groups are positioned by social structures that constrain and enable individual lives in ways largely beyond their individual control" (2001, p.6).

For instance, as in the example of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o given earlier - about his abandonment of English, you will find that there are many things that African academics would wish to do differently at individual level but they cannot due to institutional structures which are in turn influenced by global dynamics. Young adds that focusing on groups "requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression" (cited in Wilson-Strydom 2015, p.148). Such pluralism is hoped to address dominative tendencies by which some groups use their powers to universalise their ideals and suppress alternative approaches.

The challenges of inequalities inherent in classical libertarian approaches are partly addressed by Young (1990; 2006) and Rawl's (1971) 'difference principle' by which social and economic arrangements are just when they maximise the welfare of the worst-off groups.

Rawl's norm ought to be extended to the distribution of research arrangements. Certainly, 'worst-off' groups are relative to the groups in focus. In the purview of this paper, it is in comparison of African and Western scholars, then African scholars and their communities/sources of data. However, in applying Rawls' principle, one should also be critical about the basis of entitlement for the 'worst-off'. Whereas the principle should be uphelp in circumstances where the object of distribution is from a source from which all have a claim, we may not hold the same where the object are favours and with no exchange involved. For instance, although it would be ideal on humanitarian grounds, a university competing for a research grant that they are not entitled to (a favour) from an agency may not claim that they deserve to be considered first because they are worse-off. But if they were competing for a grant from their government, this claim for special consideration could be made.

In Young's view, focusing on processes and patterns of distribution of resources is insufficient since it blinds us to social structures and institutional contexts which determine those processes and patterns. It should not be assumed that ideal social structures and institutions are in place. Young argues that injustice is characterised by two social conditions, namely: oppression and domination. Oppression takes 'five faces: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. As the five faces of oppression show, there is an overlap between oppression and domination. Young's approach is important in directing focus about justice on contexts, going beyond generalised ideals. Wilson-Strydom (2015) shows that the approach has been used by various researchers to think through challenges in politics of education. Particularly applying it to research dynamics in the education context, special attention should be given to power differences and structural circumstances that construct injustices in African academia.

Among other scholarly attempts at addressing the power asymmetries and epistemological marginalisation between the North and the South which are seen to be at the center of the injustices in social science, the Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell has come up with what she called *Southern theory*. We found it helpful to integrate this theory into our framework for research justice, especially as a way of addressing structural injustices. Southern theory sets off with the argument that the pervasive approach by which theories and approaches from the global north (West) are universalised to apply to the global south without regard to context is defective and must be disturbed by expanding space to allow diverse knowledge systems to operate (Connell 2007; Connell 2014). As highlighted earlier, through a process that entrenches global coloniality (Ndlovu's-Gatsheni's 2015), the Eurocentric universalistic approach (claims to universality) has suffocated voices of a variety of other knowledges and ways of knowing.

In southern theory, the 'Southern' is used "... not to name a sharply bounded category of states or societies, but to emphasise relations – authority, exclusion and inclusion, hegemony, partnership, sponsorship, appropriation – between intellectuals and institutions in the metropole and those in the world periphery"

(Connell 2007, pp vii-ix). Mabin (2013) explains that communities/ societies that are viewed as southern are mainly those whose existence and performance is shaped by the hegemony of people and organisations or ideas from an 'outside' often characterised by a different culture. This way, the south is often subject to coloniality/ post-coloniality. Even after juridical-political decolonisation, such societies continue to live and operate under the same 'colonial power matrix', only moving from global colonialism to the current period of global coloniality (Grosfoguel cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015). The purpose of global coloniality is to ensure that the powerful Euro-North remains powerful and in charge of the south that is also characterised by disempowering deprivation and (post)colonial disabilities. Southern theory comes in as a counter-force to contest the global pattern of centrality versus dependence (Connell 2014) but not as an alternative framework similarly meant to intellectually dominate others.

Southern theory's main contribution is in calling us to specific attention to the epistemological implications of the power relations between north and south and to the need to engage with the inherent patterns of inequality through contextual sensitivity. This way we would be able to avert the absurdities and injustices of uncritically replicating metropolitan schemes. But this necessitates recognition and confrontation of the structures that produce and reproduce the undemocratic relations. With this theoretical basis, let us now focus on the Ugandan context to interrogate the justice issues in the performance of the ´publish or perish´ norm and also draw lessons from how academics go about the inherent bottlenecks.

Ugandan Academics and the 'Publish or Perish' Culture

Like in most African universities, Ugandan academics have to struggle to fit within the 'publish or perish' culture as it is exercised in the West/North. This has not been without expression of dissent and attempts at counter-idealisation and practice. In this section, through the preceding normative framework on research justice, we discuss experiences of some Ugandan academics on how they negotiate their space within the discomforts of the tradition. The focus is on gender-related challenges, relevance of produced knowledge, and relevance to local communities.

Gender and the 'publish or perish' norm

For many female academics we talked to, one of the concerns that kept coming up is that of balancing African womanhood with the demands of the 'publish or perish' call. In their view, even if the call was acceptable as an ideal for academics, it is often unfairly blind to the special socio-cultural challenges of women. Most African cultural settings still have family gender roles construed in ways that disadvantage women. Their high academic achievements notwithstanding, married academics rarely become exceptions (Ssentongo 2011). One of the female professors explained that her institution demands for publication as the only strict condition for promotion and that it applies to both male and female academics equally. The gender difference they articulated is that while:

> ... men can remain in their offices up to midnight, very few female academics can do that, especially those who are married. Very few! One, the husband will tell them, 'no, no, no, ... you can't do that'. Two, the responsibilities at home [also affect us]. If you are going to... help your children with homework and so on... you simply don't have the time to go back to office after office hours. Ah, so it just means that you have less time to do research and publish.

This narrative highlights how female academics in Ugandan (African) universities have struggled over the years to cope with the institutional demands for publication as a criterion for professional development. It shows that both effects and coping strategies differ for women and men in academia, especially in relation to time. When we shared this observation with a male colleague at Uganda Martyrs University, he asked: "are you then suggesting that the publication bar is lowered for women academics?" This question would take us into another long (though crucial) 'gender and justice' debate beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it may be said that the difference between male and female publication experiences should only be looked at as a double burden for women, without losing sight of the fact that both male and female Ugandan academics are victims of the traditional concept of research and publication; namely, knowledge dissemination through peer reviewed journals and books often published and/or consumed in the West – if at all consumed. The broader question that still persists for academia in Uganda, and indeed Africa, is why and for whom do we publish?

Context and relevance

In their narratives, both male and female academics agreed that research is an indispensable part of knowledge development. They also accept that publication is equally an important tool to disseminate knowledge. In its *National Guidelines for Research Involving Humans as Research Participants,* UNCST actually advises that "… researchers should develop plans for providing feedback on the research results and outcomes" (2014, p.34). However, many of our respondents differ in the way they understand the concept of publication from the way it is conventionally performed, namely, production of knowledge in paper/textual form. They are critical about the norms of knowledge publication by researchers in Uganda and, perhaps, Africa as a whole.

In particular, their discomfort is with the institutional framework that gives importance to book and/or article publication as a norm regardless of the context in which this knowledge is being consumed. They argue that paper publications are necessary but taking them as a norm in academia is problematic for the context of Uganda where the reading culture is poor (Nalusiba 2010). This context has been articulated particularly in the narratives of Maja (not real name), a senior lecturer at a public university. To her, context is very important in curriculum management as it is in publication. She argues that knowledge production is an accountability of academics to the society - a society that invested its resources to educate the academics who carry out research. Maja's says she has seen:

> … African professors who have published widely and they are internationally renowned, but what do they have to offer to their own people's development, right here in the village - the village in which they grew, the village which brought them up and made them professors! Nothing! I have seen professors with torn shirts and worn out shoes, I have seen professors with no houses to call their own, and with broken marriages, what have they to offer? What have they given back to the community that brought them up? That publication of theirs, how have they translated it into development? Nothing!

Although her observation does not apply to all Ugandan scholars and goes into ad hominem characterisations - apparently in angry rebuke, the critical issue she raises is that benefits of knowledge production ought to translate into tangible development outcomes not only for the researcher but also to the larger society. Outcomes such as improved livelihood are important indicators to her because it shows that knowledge gives power to people to reorganise and re-assemble their resources to create wealth and effect changes in their lives. This even becomes more compelling because, after all, academics often generate their findings from their communities.

However, extending this duty to academics is not to say that it is always and entirely their obligation to generate knowledge, disseminate it, and ensure that it comes to fruition through improved livelihoods. We acknowledge the norm of division of labour by which academics are but a player in a network of other supporting players without whom the end of knowledge generation may not be achieved. Some of the other players like civil society and government are supposed to pick on the knowledge put together by academics and translate it into social transformation initiatives. Failure to do this may not necessarily render academics irrelevant or be blamed on them. Nevertheless, our argument by which we query African academics´ relevance is two-fold: i) they should make efforts to publish their work in forms that are accessible in terms of outlet and language; ii) where possible, they should also consider forms of research that by their nature involve social transformation initiatives.

It is also important to note Freedman´s (cited in Israel and Hay 2006) caution with regard to community relevance/ value. Whereas the researched communities may not always be in know of their best interests, assessing the value of research requires an investigation not only of the views of academic peers but also the opinions of the researched community. It is common for researchers to paternalise their research communities by sometimes choosing values for them and recommending ill-informed interventions that end in disaster.

Contrary to the Kantian Categorical Imperative, not benefitting those communities would be to unfairly use them as mere means to academics´ ends. Indeed, if we compare the volumes of research produced in Uganda to research-informed community interventions we notice an immense mismatch. Such relations constitute an unfair distribution of burdens and benefits (UNCSCT 2014), with the community only taking on the burden of providing data (sometimes at high risk) without sharing on the benefits from the researches. This way, academics take on a parasitic social position that sits in uncomfortably with the traditional communitarian social relations still practiced in many Ugandan rural settings.

The above scenario (and resistance to it) is well exemplified in the following case of an elder from Amuru District in Northern Uganda that engaged a researcher for being exploitative and non-responsive to the former´s needs. The researcher, Ogora, narrates:

> It became apparent during our talk that he had been interviewed time and again by researchers who had promised him assistance but had never returned to fulfill their promises. Five minutes into the interview, the man asked me point blank to tell him how I would be of assistance to him in exchange for his testimony. In other words, he wanted me to outline specifically how my

> research would result into his being able to meet his immediate needs such as food for his large family, education for his grandchildren and a livelihood that would make all their lives better. I told him frankly that I could not promise anything and that our research aimed at generating information for advocacy (2013, p.37).

In the exchange that ensued between Ogora and the elder, below is part of what the latter said before walking away:

> I will be frank with you. Since the fires burnt and cooled in Atiak, I am tired of research work that has been going on here. Different departments have come and asked me questions and I am tired of them. Today I thought twice before coming here. People have asked my opinions and written them down, but I have seen no fruits as a result of their work. As a result, I have lost hope in researchers. I am not only referring to you, but the different departments that have come to do research, from which we have not seen any results. So I do not know what will come out of this one (*Ibid.* p.27).

The disappointment with researchers reflected in the above encounter is common in many Ugandan communities today. Whereas UNCST (2014) advises that researchers should make *reasonable* efforts to share findings of research with key stakeholders and communities in which the research was done, this hardly ever happens because it is not a strict academic requirement for promotion. Consequently, as testified by all academics we talked to, field researchers in Uganda are often faced by people who are not willing to participate in unpaid research because of questions around its usefulness to them. Because they do not expect any other generic benefits from the study, not even access to the findings, such people would then wish that at least they are paid for their information.

Of course the ethical dilemma of whether to pay respondents still continues to be debated (Molony and Hammett 2007; Jourdan 2013). On one hand, it has been argued that paying respondents could attract people into the study primarily motivated by financial gain and with the possibility of introducing bias in the study. It has also been observed that payments could cause jealousies and other frictions in the field. These possibilities run contrary to the researchers' ethical duties of generating accurate information and avoiding harm in the researched communities. On the other hand, it has been argued that researchers use the respondents' knowledge, time, and skills – often for the former's gain - hence the need to pay the latter. Paying is an admission on the researcher's side that they are going to take advantage of the respondent's knowledge (Jourdan 2013). Paying respondents becomes even more compelling in poor communities as both an act of benevolence and justice.

Our argument is that respondents should be paid where they are not bound to benefit in any way given the nature of the study. Where it is possible to benefit, then the study should be designed in such a way that such benefits are integrated in the short term or long term outputs. We note that it may not always be possible for academic researchers to determine that such benefits accrue since their primary role is to generate knowledge and not necessarily to implement it. It sometimes may happen that researchers play their part but implementers do not and therefore it may not be fair to blame the former. The idea is that efforts ought to always be made within the researchers' means to benefit research participants and/or their communities. This moral responsibility should be lifted higher than claims of having gotten people's consent to participate in research without benefits. Consent is insufficient if it is characterised by or reinforces exploitative practices (Smyth and Williamson 2004), often perpetuated by power imbalances that tilt negotiation capacities in favour of researchers.

In view of the contextual challenges inherent in the 'publish or perish' norm and in relation to societal benefit, some of the academics we interviewed raised a concern of accessibility. They emphasised that knowledge must not exclude the society from which it was generated (information mining versus knowledge generation). Given that a big part of the Ugandan population is illiterate[24] or semi-literate[25], Maja wondered; "all that knowledge in the book, what can an illiterate community get?" She challenges the very core of the publication norm that denies the right of access to information to members of society who are illiterate. Like Maja, other scholars we talked to argued that knowledge must be accessible to a large part of the primary contributors[26] in terms of cost and content.

With regard to content, as emphasised by Ngũgĩ in *Decolonising the Mind* (1987), the language used in writing is very critical as an entry point. This is both in terms of 'which language' and 'in which form'. One of our respondents asked:

> … even if they [local communities] were literate, will they understand those complicated theories and moreover written in English! What can the local people here get? Who can access that information published in books… and even understand the concepts [academic jargon]?

The idea is that the target population needs to be familiar with the content and language used for publication, or should be availed with additional dissemination forms understandable to them. Otherwise, knowledge risks being circulated only among the few literate elite and rich members of the society – if at all these will read the publications too.

L*et al.*one launching the publications among the elite in exclusive places like hotels, the tradition among the African academic community is normally to publish their original scripts in major international languages, particularly English and French. This is not in itself wrong, since there has to be cross-cultural and international communication in knowledge production. Specifically, English has become the lingua franca of the academic world. Publishing in English, "… your voice becomes part of an international discourse, and you can bring scholarship from your

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[24] An illiterate person is one who can neither read nor write in a given language.

[25] A semi-literate person is one who is unable to write or read easily or fluently in a given language.

[26] Who are often victims of the studied problems.

country that would otherwise go unrecognised to a wider audience" (Nygaard 2015, p.5). However, often these publications are not in the first place translated in the local languages to make them accessible to the local community. Of course the translation would still be problematic as it would mean that "our knowledge of Africa is … filtered through European languages and their vocabulary…" (Ngũgĩ 2013) – often losing meaning along the way. However, it is here seen as the least we should do should we fail to publish in local languages first.

Unfortunately, perhaps because it is not a requirement, we observed that many Ugandan academics have not developed their local language writing skills to a level where they can be able to use it for scholarly writing. The 'illiteracy' of Ugandan academics in their local languages seriously affects academia-community research communication. The local language illiteracy can be used to explain the increasing gap between the university and the society. Hence, the remedy according to the argument of the academics we talked to is for academia to begin to give serious consideration to local languages as another avenue to publish. Of course, this would also mean initiating and strengthening local publication outlets. That way, universities in Uganda can be internationally relevant without losing their local relevance.

It is here important to consider that many of the scholarly concepts used in most of the Western languages do not have equivalent concepts in the local languages, and vice versa. Similarly, theories on which these publications are based, although 'internationally' renowned, are sometimes not immediately locally understandable because of differences in context. The use of these languages and theories is also understandable given that formal education as it stands now in Uganda originated and is structured according to the British education system and continues to be held so by several realities of postcoloniality and global coloniality. The issue here is sticking to these languages and theories as the only forms/ means of scholarly knowledge and publication. The challenge that some of our respondents articulated is the inability of Ugandan universities to facilitate local academics to translate the existing academic theories for the local context and to factor this into weighty promotion criteria. This further complicates the relevance of Ugandan academics.

In terms of cost, for there to be justice in the distribution of the benefits of research, dissemination of knowledge should include forms that are affordable to local communities. This consideration is also related to relevance. In situations where even educational institutions such as primary and secondary schools cannot afford text books, and where university libraries are poorly stocked, the insistence on publishing through one single 'main stream' system grossly disadvantages the larger population. The question is: if 'published' books and journals are too expensive for educational institutions, how much more for the bigger part of the society whose incomes are generally low?

Most Ugandans cannot afford books, worse still journals, because it is too expensive for them. Many colleagues have published work in ´high impact factor journals´ that their students cannot even access due to high purchase/ subscription fees and paper purchase costs. Taking herself as a comparison, one academic said in an interview: "Look at me! As a senior lecturer, I cannot afford some of the books. Even some universities and schools cannot afford them because they are expensive! What about the ordinary Ugandan who has no bank account?" According to her, these contexts need to define the avenue of dissemination of knowledge in Uganda. Relying on paper publication benefits the literate and the rich that may be interested in reading - who form the minority part of the Ugandan population. The idea is not to keep the illiterate in their state and simplify research reports for them forever, but that, while illiteracy is still this high and our reading culture this poor, it would be pragmatically and morally imperative to temporarily adjust to the situation.

Negotiating the 'publish or perish' terrain

The narratives of the academics in our study did not only expose the gaps and challenges of the publication orthodoxy, they revealed some of the concrete steps some academics have taken, even at the expense of their professional career development. For instance, Kessi, a lecturer specialised in gender and the theatre, explained that:

> I hate to write for the sake of writing. I am torn between writing academically and producing films, given my theatrical background. I feel that I can touch the public much more through a film than through a paper. And so I have struggled to get round all the different tasks I have got to do so that I can sit and write a film, shoot it, and give it to the public. I think that has kind of weighed me down but I also don't feel too bad … I don't know that…but what it gives you as an opportunity is for you to write about it… That is a very good way of disseminating information… and it is a unique way that not very many people can use.

Similar to Maja, Kessi believes that paper publication is important except that her approach would be to begin with the dissemination of the information in the local community before publishing to the wider community. Kessi argues that *'there is so much you can do'* with community engagement:

> ... because you do the actual research before you write the script. So, besides the public enjoying the film, you can also utilise it to have some publication… So I think that it will be like shooting two birds with one stone, because part of it is that you have to disseminate the information.

Kessi's argues that the whole process of getting a film or information to the community is in itself a publication process worth being weighed above the lower weight attached to community engagement under which it would be placed. She also indicates that:

> ... what I know is that the institution [university] is very interested in innovative ways of researching and

> it is also very interested in the linkages between the scholars and the community. So, I think besides your ability as an academic, the institution is also interested in your ability as an administrator and as one who can change the community... [I]n that way probably you can get some points through the use of films... [But] it does not carry as many points as the book or an article…why? … I don't know that.

Kessi's observation highlights the problematic nature of the skewed balance between university roles in Uganda, and perhaps other African contexts. Although the university claims to operate on three pillars of 'teaching, research and publication, and community engagement', in promotion practice it is conceivably bent towards the pillar of research and publication. In the narrative of Kessi, it can be seen that while universities encourage academics to be innovative, they do not give substantial recognition to innovations that are accomplished through community engagement. The contradiction precisely lies in the promotion policy that does not give equal scores to academic innovations in community engagement as it does for *'conventional'* publication. Consequently, some academics are obliged to tone down their promotion aspirations in order to sustain their academic innovations in community engagement. This may not always be an easy compromise to make though, especially for academics that are quite ambitious to rise in rank. In a seemingly self-consoling tone yet possibly out of principled conviction, Kessi says:

> But really for me, it's not important whether I get something out of it in terms of promotion or not, because in a way am not that ambitious to be a professor as soon as possible. For me, I am more interested in sharing the ideas with students and, ... in its own right time, I think it will be good to be a professor. But am not so anxious that, this is what I should be working for only.

One other issue that academics seeking for change grapple with is that of the cost of accessing academic research. Kessi, for example, takes advantage of her specialisation in gender and theatre to develop village theatres in various communities and to publish information on various development issues that affect the people. She says, "their songs will tell you about hygiene, they will tell you about measles, they will tell you about education, politics … They will tell you all these things which are related to family…. name it". Consequently, Kessi explains that although she has "struggled to get round all the different tasks", she is keen to ensure that she has to "sit and write a film, shoot it and give it to the public". To Kessi, the village theatre and films go a long way to give access to information for both the illiterate and literate, rich and poor people at the same time and on the same platform. This to her is more professionally fulfilling than keeping that information in an academically written book.

Whereas the majority of academics we interviewed were mainly committed to the conventional ´publish or perish´ in dissemination of their research, there were a number of other small community initiatives like that of Kessi. One assistant lecturer told us she was setting up a cultural team to confront the issue of deprivation of widows and orphans when a husband passes on. Another lecturer was actively involved with civil society organisations that deal with the urban poor, and criminal justice. An associate professor was busy with agricultural programmes in rural areas in eastern Uganda. One of the teaching assistants was considering to develop a programme for traffic control using artificial intelligence…etc. As individuals, these few academics were engaged in creating new fronts to actively challenge the existing academic tradition in the university. Their narratives, which are near to protest, signal that if what is considered as a 'publication' is strictly what goes into normative mainstream publications of journals and books hidden behind expensive digital paywalls (Heleta 2016), then '*we have not published*', but if it is dissemination of knowledge, then '*we have published widely'*. Thus Maja tells us;

> For me... I have started a primary school to give chance to poor people to access formal education. I am a role model in this village, in the district. I have been invited to teach peasants and village women about health, and development issues. I have been invited to talk to the youth that it is possible to make their lives better. I am down there among the people, sharing knowledge, giving back to them [for] what they invested in me. I am also a very serious academic at the university, with my students and [fellow] staff. Is that not better than publication in a book? Just for the sake of promotion? Yes, *I have not published and I have not perished* [emphasis ours]!

The point in the above self-appraisal is that it is important, as argued by Southern theory, for African universities to curve their specific identity by adding to it the local realities that build what goes as international. This move would make research more meaningful and just. Contrary to the homogenising drive of the current wave of globalisation (Nyamnjoh 2004; Stiglitz 2006), the international ought to be an amalgamation of specific local realities. It is actually calling academics back to the basic reason of knowledge creation: indigenising university policies, development of society. However, as one academic observed in corroboration of Nduhukire Owa-Mataze (2004), it would be difficult to indigenise research if it is still largely dependent on foreign funding and under arrangements where research problems and methodologies (including dissemination strategies) are dictated by funders.

Conclusion

Research remains the unquestionable cornerstone of academic work. This means that for academics´ work to be locally meaningful, their research has to be tailored to the circumstances of its context. We have argued that the above consideration is very crucial in research ethics, especially with particular regard to research justice. Justice has been a concern in ethics discourse in research since the Helsinki Declaration (1964) and, more specifically, the Belmont Report (1979), but not putting much attention on contextual justice issues regarding the 'one size fits all' performance of the ´publish or perish´ tradition.

It has also been shown that much of the research conducted by Ugandan academics, especially in the social sciences, strictly operating by the standards of the 'publish or perish' trajectory, ends up not benefitting the contexts within which it is generated. This way, local communities are unfairly treated as 'mere means' to academics' ends while at the same time academics alienate themselves from their communities and, to an extent, from their labour – as they are also often unable to refer their work for accessible usage. Application of southern theory here shows that this practice is mainly perpetuated by the insistence on research dissemination approaches that seek to homogenously position all academic practice into the ´international´- an approach that defines promotion criteria in most universities. Academics seeking to move up the ranks often find themselves with little or no room for operating differently per their context. Indeed, many who veer off this path ´perish´.

We do not argue that all research should have direct benefits to the community, as it is understood that sometimes knowledge has to go through various levels of production and application to result into 'tangible' results. It is also considered that some knowledge may take rather long to be appreciated, and this does not mean that it is of no use. We suggest that, where possible, direct benefits should not be overlooked. Or, at least, where viable, the community should know the extended outcomes of the information generated from them. Such practice would not only ensure justice in research and respect for the autonomy of research participants, but also enhance researchers' credibility for the good of the research enterprise.

Testimonies of female academics show that the patriarchal dynamics of the Ugandan setting disadvantage them even more than their male counterparts, but that, overall, both are victims. The forms they are using to remain relevant to their communities illustrate the urgency of the need to rethink academic promotion criteria, especially on the grounds of social justice stretching beyond exclusionary conformity to international norms. If local community feedback, mutual interconnection, and relevance should remain part of what is referred to as 'community engagement' in promotion criteria, then, as an incentive, it ought to be raised from the status of a negligible appendix to that of a necessary requirement in disciplines where it is possible. Conventional international publication practices without unreasonable quality compromises remain important, but it is grossly unjust and pointless if academics keep publishing in forms and outlets that deny their communities (data sources) of research benefits.

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