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Publish or Perish: Research Dilemmas Encountered by Academicians in Zimbabwean Colleges

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Abstract

The Heritage-Based Education (HBE 5.0) philosophy in Zimbabwe aims to foster innovative research among Collegians to industrialise the economy and achieve a middle-class status, in sync with the National Development Strategy 1 (2021-2025) and Vision 2030 Agenda. This philosophy encourages a 'publish or perish' mind-set to enhance global competitiveness, expanding beyond universities' traditional tripartite mandate of teaching, research and community engagement. In this study I explored challenges faced by Collegians in publishing in accredited journals through a qualitative case study that included interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. The multiple data generation methods used on the purposively sample of 9 participants, enhanced the credibility of data generated through methodological triangulation. An inductive-thematic analysis employed revealed a lack of publications due to high processing fees and non-discursive conventional barriers, highlighting the need for a culture of institutionalised research that focuses on community-specific niche areas to attract funding and leverage indigenous knowledge.

Subject Areas

Higher Education

Keywords

Accredited Journals, Ethical Procedure, Predatory Journals, Recruitment, Research Productivity

1. Introduction

Knowledge production demands frequent publications which is regarded as "one

of the few powerful methods at the scholar's disposal to demonstrate academic talents to peers" (p. 87) [1]. Successful publication of research brings attention to the scholars and their institution, in turn bringing in more funding and ensuring individual progress in the field [2]. Scholars without publications find themselves out of contentions for many teaching positions and career progression [1]. The connection between research excellence and productivity has popularised Coolidge's 1932 "publish or perish" paradigm, a harsh reality which haunts many academics globally [3]. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the practical dilemmas Zimbabwean Collegians encountered in publishing in accredited journals (AJ) and proffer specific recommendations meant to improve interest and support for the research initiative.

2. Background

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development (MHTESTD) introduced the Heritage-Based Education (HBE) 5.0 Model in 2019, emphasising innovation and industrialisation over and above its tripartite mission of teaching, research and community engagement in order to produce job-creators. Collegians (*i.e.*, College lecturers) were being challenged to conduct research in designated niche areas as part of the national transformation agenda initiative [4]. This philosophy is in consonant with the global technological and environmental transformations which were taking place in the research space, in sync with the nation's developmental agenda which is science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) oriented [4].

The HBE 5.0 philosophy guides Collegians to advance science and technology for industrial development [5] [6], aligning with the government's devolution agenda [7]. Viewed from the Ministry's lense, science must hold a privileged position in this context and must be used to power any industrial developmental agenda [8]. In this context, Collegians are required to establish provincial councils that spearhead the economies of the host province through research [9]. Such a scientific thrust demands tertiary leadership to build institutional capacity to generate knowledge through research for the purposes of developing knowledge that is readily absorbed into the provincial economy or for export purposes [9]. Therefore, Collegians must speak to this new trajectory through re-socialisation in an attempt to industrialise and modernise the Zimbabwean economy [10].

For that reason, Zimbabwe Teachers' Colleges, trying to unpack the Ministry's philosophy, host research conferences where different research papers are presented meant to enhance research productivity, although there seems to be a dearth of documented evidence in the public domain [11]. However, through research which proposes solutions based on critical thinking, and the creation of new knowledge [4]. Collegians in their different capacities face a myriad of practical dilemmas in research productivity, particularly in AJs for different reasons. AJs by international quality standards are peer reviewed periodicals devoted to disseminating original research [12]. For a journal to be accredited, it

must have an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), a credible editorial board, a clear peer review policy and publish regularly [12]. For example, in Zimbabwe, such journals are approved, registered and regulated by the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) in terms of the ZIMCHE Act (Chapter 25:27) [12].

3. Literature Review

Research must take centre stage for innovation and industrialisation to take place and its multiple function must lead to the production of goods and services [13]. Vurayai and Ndofirepi [14] aptly indicate that tertiary institutions accord premium value, space and time to research. For example, they engage their students in the research enterprise, yet there is less research productivity on their part [15]. Paradoxically, the development of human capital depends on the quality of its academic staff [16]. Resultantly, the current rapid worldwide transformations demand continuous professional development through research if complex economic challenges bedevilling Zimbabwe are to be resolved [16].

In that view, research becomes core business and has the capacity to innovate and industrialise the Zimbabwean economy [4]. Therefore, Collegians need a new mindset in the execution of deliverables in their institutions and communities [16]. Needless to say, that research initiatives cost money and time, therefore the practical dilemmas Collegians encounter if ignored, threaten to undo the good intentions it offers [16]. Furthermore, the policy arena of the research space demands that they find joy in solving complex problems, not to be driven by a passion for boosting their curriculum vitae [CV] [17].

Globally, research productivity in an AJ is now a key standard for research evaluation and internationalisation policies, but this results in many scholars lacking a clear agenda due to the high rewards associated with it [3]. Scholars face pressure that diverts them from teaching as they focus more on personal research achievements [3]. The competitive "publish or perish" mentality has led to the rise of predatory journals and various unethical practices like salami slicing, plagiarism, duplicate publications, ghost authors, wasteful research and fraudulent researches [1]. Such dubious practices though meant to boost one's CV and tenure, damages the reputation of the authors, journal and institutions [1]. Although the number of journals has increased, citations have decreased due to low readership [3]. More importantly, meaningful research requires intellectual honesty, as dishonesty has produced "zombie professors" in developing countries [18].

The complex publication process can be a barrier for neophyte researchers in Zimbabwean universities as they face pressure to "publish or perish" from the ZIMCHE [11]. However, colleges lack similar pressure, leading to lower research productivity, despite the National Development Strategy 1 and Vision 2030 agenda which are anchored on the HBE 5.0 philosophy [10], emphasising innovation and research as key to worldwide academic identity [11].

Dilemmas Faced by Collegians in the Publishing Industry

Collegians pressurised by the research mantra, have been found to be more perishing than publishing [19]. Although they have tried to publish here and there but their research outputs for both neophyte and experienced researchers are invisible in AJs [11]. The primary argument is that Colleges as constituencies are faced with practical dilemmas which require untangling.

Studies by Sub-Saharan African scholars show that various challenges limit publication in AJs [20]. Garwe [11] notes that teaching duties and family responsibilities often push academics to prioritise research secondarily. Wadesango [21] agrees with [11] when he states that routine responsibilities, like supervising students, take time away from personal research. Additionally, moonlighting for extra income leads to fatigue [22]. Furthermore, financial constraints and high access charges also restrict research productivity and access to scientific information which is usually demanded by AJs [20].

Moreover, Manjoni's study [23] shows that research quality in Zimbabwean tertiary institutions is low due to limited research exposure and an imbalance between teaching and research. Exposure is crucial as it socialises researchers into versatile research skills needed if research productivity is to be boosted within the AJ's operating standards [24]. Methodological issues also hinder Developing-World research, as scholars often lack familiarity with quantitative methods [22]. Alternatively, using qualitative methods requires strong defence against quantitative standards [25]. Perhaps, mentorship and collaboration could minimise the practical dilemmas neophyte researchers encounter and boost publications in AJs [22].

The other internal dilemma they are faced with is the negative attitude by administrative staff toward research and researchers from within the profession [26]. Such attitudes make academics mystify issues surrounding research and lay a claim that it is difficult and is a preserve for an elite. In acknowledgement, [27] further postulate that the prospect of writing engenders apprehension and trepidation among Collegians. Even the "guarded channels of knowledge representation and distribution backed by stringent peer review protocols" which is a culture of AJs aggravates their plight (p. 317) [25].

Reviewers play a crucial role in ensuring research is novel, credible, and well-executed, acting as gatekeepers of knowledge claims [25]. Research output is shaped by authors' efforts for acceptance, conforming to the expectations of editors and reviewers [28]. Additionally, research must relate to existing studies, posing challenges due to the costs of accessing current literature [25]. This creates barriers for resilient academics, as publishing in predatory journals leads to 'lost science' [18]. Furthermore, the dominance of English in publishing creates significant challenges for Developing-World scholars, who may struggle with language barriers [14]. The researcher's native language usually influences thinking and shapes writing as one would first conceptualise a problem in a native language and communicate it in English which increases one's workload [29]. In that way, "Eng-

lish as a colonial language is being used as a global language for publication to suppress native languages and knowledge production by Developing-World scholars" (p. 14) [28]. Such reliance on English suppresses native languages and diminishes the production of indigenous knowledge in the Sub-Saharan, more so that most knowledge productions in developing countries are dominated by knowledge conversation at the expense of publications [28].

Notably, academics who are skilled in English can publish more easily [18]. In contrast, publishing in local languages could help many African scholars, but it is difficult to move away from traditional journal conventions, even in linguistics [30]. These non-discursive conventions hinder scholars from developing countries, as the dominant publishing culture from developed countries sets the standards for global research dissemination [28].

Disturbing though are studies that show that many scholars from the Developing World face strict submission rules and high page fees, which exclude them due to bias from Developed World editors against Sub-Saharan research [17]. These requirements may influence which research gets published in an AJ or instigate an ideological policy [28].

Even the open-access publishing often excludes scholars from Developing-World due to high costs, creating an uneven academic field [31]. Aggravating the situation are College administrators who require three publications for promotions and tenure, regardless of their quality [25]. Therefore, Developing-World scholars must seek editors who offer processing cost discounts if they are to be competitive in the global research market [20]. Given the foregoing publishing dilemmas, it is evident that the research output at Zimbabwean Colleges is bound to be low, hence this study.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Institutional Theory (IT) by Meyer and Rowan [32] as further developed by DiMaggio and Powell [33] and also advanced by Jepperson [34]. The IT posits that organisations operate within institutional environments that shape their structures, practices, and behaviours. Rather than referring to the biological concept of isomorphism, the theory uses organisational isomorphism to explain the tendency of organisations within the same field to become similar as they respond to common institutional pressures.

According to [33], organisational convergence occurs through three forms of institutional pressure: coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphism. Coercive pressures arise from formal rules, regulations, and requirements imposed by powerful institutions. Normative pressures stem from professional values, standards, and expectations that guide acceptable practice. Mimetic pressures occur when organisations imitate successful or legitimate practices adopted by others, particularly under conditions of uncertainty.

In this regard [35], Zuiker's role of organisational social and cultural behaviour is supported by Scott [36], who further explains that institutions are founded on

regulative, normative, and cognitive pillars that provide stability, legitimacy, and meaning to social behaviour. These institutional practices help to maintain professional standards [37]. Similarly, March and Olsen's [38] concept of new institutionalism emphasises the manner in which institutional rules and norms shape both individual and organisational decision-making processes.

The IT was considered appropriate for this study because academic journals operate within a highly institutionalised environment characterised by established editorial structures, peer-review procedures, publication ethics, and author guidelines. The study findings may be interpreted through the three forms of institutional pressure. Coercive pressures are reflected in the strict submission requirements, formatting guidelines, and publication policies that authors must comply with before their manuscripts can be considered for publication. Normative pressures arise from professional expectations regarding research quality, scholarly writing, ethical conduct, and academic credibility. Mimetic pressures are evident when Collegians adopt publishing strategies, writing styles, and research practices used by successful authors in order to increase their chances of publication.

Through these institutional pressures, AJs influence the behaviour of prospective authors and shape their publishing experiences. The theory therefore provides a useful lense for understanding how institutional requirements, professional norms, and expectations within the academic publishing environment create opportunities and challenges for Collegians seeking to publish in AJs. Consequently, the IT informed the interpretation of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the dilemmas they encounter in their efforts to publish scholarly work which I sought to explore through a qualitative study.

5. Research Methodology

The ontological and epistemological philosophical assumption underpinning the study was constructivism [39], as I sought to explore the practical dilemmas which inhibit Zimbabwean Collegians to publish in AJs. Towards that end, the primary concern was to socially construct reality from the subjective, unique and multiple views inherent in the participants through engagement in an attempt to have an in-depth understanding of the social phenomenon using a qualitative approach [40].

5.1. Research Method

I used a single-case study method to generate concrete, contextual and in-depth knowledge from Collegians as I sought to explore the social phenomenon intensively in its natural setting [41]. The assumption was that new perceptions would emerge from qualitative data unearthed which would offer practical solutions to publication dilemmas Collegians faced [42]. However, I was also conscious of the fact that a qualitative case study method is chastised for its lack of scientific rigor and its failure to develop testable generalisations [43]. To ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative data generated, Lincoln and Guba [44]'s criteria of quality as-

surance were employed. Conformability and credibility of generated data was achieved by methodological triangulation and drawing correct interpretations of original ideas of participants respectively. I also achieved dependability through an inquiry audit done by an external person which entailed examining and reviewing the research process critically along with the data analysis and the thick descriptions employed ensured that the research outcomes could be transferred to similar contexts.

5.2. Research Participants and Sampling

Due to time constraints and limited resources, purposive sampling was employed to select participants who were knowledgeable and experienced in the phenomenon under investigation [45]. Participants were approached through their respective schools and invited to take part in the study. Inclusion criteria comprised Collegians who had presented papers at Teachers' Symposia, teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience, those who had authored or published textbooks, and selected early-career teachers with less than five years of teaching experience. These categories were chosen because they were considered information-rich and capable of providing diverse perspectives relevant to the research question [46]. Recognising that purposive sampling is prone to selection bias, this limitation was managed by including participants with varied professional backgrounds and levels of experience influenced by my personal judgements [47]. The application of these criteria resulted in a sample of nine participants, four of whom participated in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Demographic data for participants.

College	Participant	Gender	Professional Qualifications	Exp	PP	Pu
A	A1	F	Master of Technical Education (Applied Art & Design)	14	0	0
A	A2	M	Master of Curriculum Studies	15	18	9
A	A3	F	Master of Education Technology (Crop Science)	18	0	0
A	A4	F	Master of Education and Educational Psychology	10	4	1
A	A5	F	PhD	20	10	4
FGD A	A6	F	Master of Education in Early Childhood Development	9	0	1
FGD A	A7	M	Master of Education in Educational Administration and Policy Studies	15	0	0
FGD A	A8	M	Bachelor of Education	2	0	0
FGD A	A9	M	Bachelor of Science (Honours) Geography & Population Studies	5	0	0

Key: Admin = Administration; G = Gende; P = Participant; Exp = Experience in years; M = Male; PP = Papers presented; F = Female; PhD = Doctor of Philosophy; Pu = Publication.

Nine Collegians participated in this study of which five were females and four were males. Of these, two were first degree holders, six possessed Master's degrees

in various domains and one had a PhD. Their teaching experiences ranged from two years (PA8) to 20 years (PA5). PA5, a PhD holder had presented and published fewer papers than PA2 despite having served longer (see Table 1). Disappointing though were PA1, PA3 and PA7 who had served for 14, 18 and 15 years respectively but had presented and published nothing. However, I sympathised with PA8 and PA9 who were likeminded due to their limited experience and qualifications, although I strongly felt that the latter could have presented and published at least one paper within his five years of tenure.

Departing from the tradition of paper publication were PA1 and PA3 who had published textbooks instead. They published a Grade 3 textbook (Visual and Performance Arts) and an A-Level textbook (Crop Science) respectively energised by periodic royalties they received.

Judging by the participants' varied qualifications, experiences, authorship, papers presented/published and not presented/published, I was convinced that the selected lecturers would give credible and authentic responses on the phenomenon. To achieve this feat, I used multiple data sources to generate data, prolonged engagement in the site, member checking and data triangulation [44].

5.3. Research Site

The institution under investigation is one of the oldest Teacher Training Colleges which was established in 1970 by an amalgamation of churches for the purposes of producing diverse quality teachers in multiple disciplines for church rural schools. It was donated to the government in 1982. It has a staff establishment of 81 lecturers specialising in various domains of which 3 are PhD holders, 50 masters and 28 first degree holders. It is resident to 1 400 students and offers diplomas in general primary, early childhood development, special educational needs, inclusive and specialist education. It is located 6 km away from the city centre on the western edge.

5.4. Entry into the Research Site

Since gaining access to the research site was "a prerequisite; a precondition for the research to be conducted" (p. 224) [48], a working alliance with the gatekeepers and participants was developed. The task was meant to establish a rapport with gatekeepers which would build trust between both parties [49]. To establish the credibility and legitimacy of the study, I attached the approval letter from the MHTESTD to the application letter which sought permission from the principal to conduct the study in his area of jurisdiction [48]. To the participants who consented, the reasons for choosing their institution, the usage and storage of data generated, the way the study would be conducted, the sampling procedure employed and ethical issues observed were explained [48]. In the process, the benefits that would accrue to both the institution and participants were availed as well [50]. The assumption was that as soon as permission was granted by the gatekeepers, all participants would immediately acquiesce [48], but others reacted defensively

and apathetically [49].

To avoid the study being suspected to be one of those institutional familiar procedures fitted in administrative routines, as soon as approval was endorsed, I quickly became closer to the participants and the Research Coordinator who became the link person [49]. Acquaintances with consenting participants, collection of biographic data, familiarisation with the site, study briefings, and interview appointments followed[48]. On exit, I promised the gatekeepers and participants that the findings would be shared with them upon publication [48].

5.5. Data Generation Methods

Since the case study research concerned "an in-depth study of a phenomenon in its real-world context" (p. 172) [40], relevant data was generated through a multiple of sources [41]. The 5 key informants and a four member FGD were audiotaped for 30 minutes and an hour respectively using a semi-structured interview protocol with open-ended questions. During the interview, my role alternated from being an interviewer to capturing data [51]. Interviews were interrupted by probes for clarifications and FGD data was moderated for authenticity [40].

To supplement interview data, documentary evidence (see **Table 1**) and verbal and non-verbal cues observed were used [40]. The documentary evidence from research participants, comprising articles published from conference paper presentations and independently published textbooks, was used to corroborate and authenticate data obtained through interviews and focus group discussions during the triangulation process. Information which was contradictory was interrogated further and that which enhanced the meaning of the phenomenon [52]. In that way, the multiple realities of the participants' perspectives convinced me that data generated from the multiple sources and theoretical perspectives gleaned from the literature surveyed would develop a holistic picture of the phenomenon in question and make the findings credible [41].

5.6. Data Analysis

The qualitative data generated was analysed using the inductive-thematic analysis method [38]. I first familiarised myself with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts for understanding [39]. Directed by the stream of questions which consistently pursued my line of inquiry in a fluid and flexible manner [53] focusing on the key themes, the most interesting features of relevant data which emerged were coded and listed according to the central organising concept [54]. I further classified similar and dissimilar segments of data differently and later on compared and contrasted them so as to identify relationships [39]. This process entailed reviewing the grouped segments and hand-coding them into related categories and subcategories of information [40]. The categories were reduced into themes based on the multiple perceptions of the particcipants [40] and provided a framework for organising and reporting my analytical observations [39]. The various views generated by the qualitative analysis of data were interwoven and

interconnected with the perceptions from the literature surveyed in response to the research problem.

5.7. Ethics Consideration

I sought Ethics clearance from the Zimbabwe Open University Review Board (ZQNSP/12/23). I also sought permission to conduct the research from the MHT-ESTD and principal. After that, I informed the participants of the potential psychological or physical harm which they would experience and benefits that would accrue thereafter by partaking in the study [39]. Those who voluntarily consented I made them complete the consent forms [50]. Withdrawals at data generation stage were tolerated without queries [39]. In addition, I guaranteed the institution and participants' confidentiality and anonymity as well [39]. Furthermore, I assured the participants that in the event of adverse effects being experienced, debriefing and counselling would be employed [39]. Thereafter, the data I generated was de-identified, coded, encrypted and stored in the hard drive of my laptop. I then promised the participants that such data would be deleted completely and hard copies shredded at a later date [55].

6. Findings

I reported the findings under the identified themes using thick descriptions and inclusively intertwining them with reviewed literature.

6.1. Theme 1: Participants' Knowledge of the Concept of the HBE 5.0 Model

All the five key informants asserted that the Model went beyond the original three pillars of education as it included '*innovation*' and '*industrialisation*'. Their perceptions resonated well with the proposed National Development Strategy 1 and Vision 2030 which are anchored on the HBE 5.0 philosophy [10]. In elaboration, PA1 and PA2 viewed it as "focused on the production of tangible goods and services in the process of learning by engaging learners in problem-solving activities." The "hands-on and entrepreneurship approach" embedded in it (PA4), "encouraged research, scientific innovation and development" as quipped by PA3. The accomplishment of such a dream would only be realised if "Colleges produce graduate teachers who have the capacity to innovate and industrialise as they contribute towards an upper-middle class economy by 2030" (PA5). In concurrence, the FGD participants collectively perceived the Model as "an education system that produces learners who are self-reliant, self-productive, self- employed and which promotes job creation."

Furthermore, PA7 and PA8 likened the Model to the Zimbabwean post-independence philosophy of Education with Production (EWP) and lamented its demise due to the "lack of consistency in educational policies" caused by positional changes in the Ministry. EWP was meant to integrate theory and practice in all aspects of the curriculum reforms undertaken in Zimbabwe [56].

In conclusion, I inferred that the participants' perceptions were in consonant with the governments' proposal to have research skills play a pivotal role in the generation of new knowledge which would power any technological and developmental agenda Zimbabwe yearned to achieve through the HBE 5.0 Model [4] [10] [13].

6.2. Theme 2: Ethical Procedures

Of the 3 key informants who had published, PA2, PA4 and PA5 knew that permission must be sought from the participants, gatekeepers, education authorities and the Ministry's Permanent Secretary before research is conducted as noted in:

> Seek ethics clearance from relevant authorities. (PA2)
> Seek permission from the participants, gatekeepers and educational authorities. (PA4)
> Seek ethical clearance through the College Research Committee and approval from the Ministry…(*thinking*)…apply to the Ministry through the Principal who will issue you a letter of good will that must be attached to the application. (PA5)

However, during the interviews, I discovered that PA4 was not aware that permission must be sought from the Permanent Secretary. Similarly, PA1 and PA3 were ignorant too as research productivity was not their constituency. Instead, they preferred textbook writing, which entailed generating an abstract from an advert which must be acceptable to the editorial team before authorship. In authoring books, issues of concern are "qualifications, knowledge of the syllabus and subject matter" (PA1). When prospective authors have met such requirements, contractual engagements, orientation workshops and attachment to mentors follows.

Unfortunately, none of the FGD participants knew the academic rituals researchers undertook, save the two, who had a faint idea of the little distractions which limited publications as exhibited in:

> Despite having been cleared by my institution, when I got there, I was referred to several offices until I surrendered. (PA7)
> I seek consent from the relevant stakeholders and communities. (PA9)

The participants' sentiments suggested limited awareness of the stringent submission and review requirements associated with AJs [17] [28]. Viewed through the lense of IT, this may indicate that they had not yet been sufficiently exposed to the coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures that promote conformity with accepted scholarly publishing standards [33] [36]-[38]. Consequently, they appeared insufficiently socialised into the institutional norms governing academic publication, which affected their understanding of the demands of the publishing process.

6.3. Theme 3: Recruitment and Promotion

As testified by PA1, it seems that the recruitment and promotion based on re-

search productivity exists in theory only not practice:

At Colleges it is merely hearsay. I am not privy to how the recruitment team does it. Promotion based on articles has been proposed to encourage lecturers to research and publish at least three articles.

FGD participants concurred as manifested in "articles are not considered for promotion and lecturers do not publish" (PA6). However, on recruitment, PA2, PA3, PA4 and PA5 unanimously dismissed the use of publications as expressed by PA2:

When a vacancy arises, College adverts posted demand qualifications only. It may be an "O" or "A" level certificate and a first degree in the area of specialisation. A Master's degree becomes an added advantage.

To further clarify the recruitment procedure, was PA5 who said, "Of late, the minimum requirement is a Master's degree in the relevant area and a PhD becomes an added advantage particularly in the Theory of Education and Professional Studies domains." She also expressed her reservations on promotions which are based on research productivity as most co-authored articles were meant "to boost the quantity of publications for tenure, not knowledge production in one's area of specialisation."

In that regard, I concluded that research productivity at Colleges was driven by the passion to boost one's CV for tenure as postulated by [17], not knowledge production and a demonstration of academic talents as unearthed by [1]'s study. Little wonder that, there is a dearth of documented evidence in the public domain among Collegians [11].

6.4. Theme 4: Practical Dilemmas Faced by Collegians in the Publishing Industry

Generally, most Collegians who had published were motivated by the University of Zimbabwe's editorial team (UZET) who sought academic papers meant to promote their journals. First, lecturers were inducted and thereafter, papers were called for. Those who complied had their papers published freely. However, the bi-annual production of papers coupled with the stiff competition which prevailed, delayed the publication process. To worsen matters, the page fees introduced (US$30 - $50) meant to offset production costs, seem to have grossly restricted research productivity as observed by PA2.

Funding is my major dilemma. There is no research grant and our institution is not coming on board to facilitate the growth of the researcher. Moreover, I don't know the difference between accredited and predatory journals.

Similarly, PA5 in acknowledgement said, "Since most lecturers are civil servants, they are financially constrained to publish in AJs, more so, that research is not core business in Colleges." In corroboration, PA4 echoed that,

Lack of resources cripples the research process. Lecturers are hungry and prefer eking out a living to researching which is non-rewarding. We spend most of our precious time moonlighting.

Likewise, the issue of funding was emphatically reiterated by the FGD participants as highlighted by PA7 in (a *high-pitched voice*) "Paper publication demands financial resources which our meagre salaries cannot match." In the same vein, PA8 who teaches an indigenous language said, "The costs of travelling out there to meet the rural folks on cultural issues to do with the language are unbearable." A sentiment which was equally reiterated by PA6 (*in a harsh tone*).

Article publication does not benefit us in whatever way. Moreover, the exercise is taxing and as civil servants, we earn peanuts (*fuming*). We are not even sure whether we know the demands required for one to publish.

PA6's ignorance of the research demands was not surprising as it confirmed [23]'s revelation that many Zimbabwean scholars did not publish in AJs due to limited exposure and proper socialisation in the research culture. Furthermore, participants unanimously agreed that the following dilemmas curtailed research productivity: "power outages", "internet connectivity" and "lack of time for research". However, despite those challenges, their bone of contention was the lack of "recognition and research incentives" by the parent College or Ministry as lamented by PA2 in "The extra mile one goes at one's expense is not rewarded".

Of the two textbook writers, although they claimed to have experienced similar dilemmas as article publishers, those peculiar to their task were: "remuneration although quoted in US dollars, the payment is in local currency per inter-bank rate of the day" (PA1) and "expensive data bundles when working at home, hiring assistants and typists, meeting set deadlines and the publishers delay to pay us royalties" (PA3). Despite participants experiencing various research dilemmas as depicted in this study, PA9 believed that the experience itself gave them "the opportunity to publish."

Based on the conversations presented above, I concluded that research productivity among Collegians in AJs was grossly constrained by funding as most of their published articles were by invitation. However, those who were motivated to publish further using their personal resources [22], fell prey to predatory journals which offered a cheaper option although it resulted in lost science [18].

6.5. Theme 5: Solutions to Publication Dilemmas Collegian Researchers Encountered

Generally, Collegian researchers believe in the high premium the Ministry places on research productivity and the role it plays in transforming communities. All they demanded was funding and motivation as averred in:

> The College must pay 50% or 100% of the page fees to alleviate our financial burden. Lack of recognition, incentives and promotion for publication makes us view research as valueless. (PA2)
>
> In Teachers' Colleges research is not core business, although in strategic planning it is budgeted for. (PA5)

Similarly, FGD participants concurred as reiterated in:

We must be financially supported and given incentives if we are to continue publishing. Moreover, promotions must be based on publications. (PA6)
Research is not funded except the traveling subsistence allowance given for conference paper presentation. (PA7)
The expense is not worth the trouble. (PA8)
When my laptop crashes, nobody cares. (PA9)

PA2 went further to postulate that prolific researchers at College level must be registered by ZIMCHE and be utilised to spearhead national workshops involving research or developmental projects as expressed in:

A register of renowned College researchers must be kept and these must be allocated national tasks or programmes to execute. They must also spearhead research-oriented educational reforms instead of people with dubious research backgrounds.

He further suggested that the UZET annual publications be increased and more peer-reviewers be recruited from renowned College researchers to boost research outputs, a sentiment which was affirmed by PA5. On the issue of internet connectivity, although PA2 incredibly suggested that researchers must purchase their own data bundles to decongest the College internet facility, PA4 proposed that the "internet bandwidth must be broadened and accessed separately by learners and lecturers". Alternatively, lecturers should be allowed "unlimited excess to the internet" as intimated by PA9.

On the contrary, textbook authors (PA1 and PA3) strongly contested the breaching of contractual engagements by publishers when it came to royalties. They even thought of exposing the publishers through the local press to mitigate their predicament. In summation, PA2 and PA3 emphatically hinted that lecturers must know that there was "no innovation and industrialisation without research" and such research must be in the niche areas designated by communities for it to be "pragmatic, relevant and meaningful" respectively. Based on these observations, I surmised that the establishment of provincial councils meant to spearhead economies of host provinces as part of the devolution agenda was inevitable.

7. Discussion

The findings reveal that the absence of a clear-cut policy framework on which the fundamental principles of the HBE 5.0 philosophy must be anchored on has led to distortions and misinterpretations at implementation level. This has made some participants liken it to the prematurely abandoned concept of EWP which was equally misunderstood. I therefore, argue that, viewing the philosophy as mere empowerment or production of goods and services as perceived by the participants, without zeroing in on research, might have resulted in copycat or traditional projects meant to generate funds for their livelihood and the College's sustenance. Resultantly, most projects proffered lacked innovation which is crucial for industrialisation as envisioned by this study. However, those who wanted to go commercial lacked capital as well.

Most participants investigated as revealed by this study had not published, let alone in an internationally AJ as most of their publications were by invitation and meant for promotional purposes. Those who had attempted to do so in predatory journals were not privy to the daunting ethical procedures and non-discursive submission conventions which AJs have institutionalised. Little wonder, PA7 capitulated when he sought clearance.

The empirical evidence of the study has also revealed that research in Zimbabwean Colleges is neither core business nor rewarding although it is budgeted for. Most of those who had published had done so by invitation. Arguably so, it is neither considered for recruitment nor promotion; hence the dearth of research productivity in the public domain, despite paper presentations being sponsored [11]. The exclusion of College researchers in national tasks involving research due to non-availability of a formal research register exacerbated the situation. Little wonder, research productivity at this level was meant to boost their CV for tenure, not knowledge production. Ultimately, such book-shelf researches lose practical value to host communities and the growing competition to publish makes Collegians lose interest in the process.

Since research is a taxing exercise which must be resourced, Zimbabwean Collegians as revealed by this qualitative study are not an exception. Most of them, bemoaned the lack of funding at this level to enable them fund the entire research process, publish in AJs, gain exposure to open-access international acclaimed AJs and access the e-library. However, the two participants who had published more than one article, in pursuant of the HBE 5.0 Model had done so at their own expense against the background of poor salaries. Despite that effort, the delay in publishing articles and lack of appreciation from the parent Ministry has demotivated them as well. Faced with such a plethora of practical dilemmas, most participants preferred moonlighting to research, hence, curtailing research productivity in the public domain.

8. Limitations

The findings of the study are limited to one institution and cannot be generalised because of a small sample size. Interpretations of qualitative data may be biased, which renders the findings exploratory rather than definitive. Future research should include a wider sample across various universities to encompass the diverse experiences of Collegians.

9. Implications for Practice and Future Research

Based on the study, the following recommendations are made:

The policy framework on which the HBE 5.0 Model is anchored on must be clearly defined and disseminated to tertiary institutions for reference, implementation and monitoring purposes. Presently, as a stop-gap measure, workshops meant to socialise Collegians on the philosophical implications of the Model and research productivity demanded to innovate and industrialise the Zimbabwean

economy must be manned. Furthermore, recruitment and promotions must be based on research productivity in AJs if the institutionalised research culture is to be nurtured and appreciated by would-be authors. Most importantly, research outputs must be incentivised. To further make research pragmatic, it must be community-based in partnership with the corporate world to enhance growth and job creation. Such engagements would no doubt attract the much-needed sponsorship in the publication industry.

Seed money for research must be provided by the MHTESTD rather than relying on College budgets whose disposable income is outstretched. The Ministry must further identify international and domestic agencies which fund research and College researchers must be encouraged to apply for such grants with government being the guarantor.

ZIMCHE through the National Research Board must not only monitor the utilisation of the research grant but make it mandatory for all registered tertiary institutions to have a scientific journal in their name. The terms of reference for journal accreditation and establishment of the Ethics Review Committee must be prescribed with regards to the subject matter, style and academic protocols to be adhered to for institutionalisation purposes. Such a Board must also approve elevations of lecturers and appointments for national research-oriented assignments.

Alternatively, Zimbabwean tertiary institutions must seek AJs which offer special discounts or wavers if their research are to compete with the best in the publication industry so as to match those of the Developing-world. Besides that, contractual engagements involving textbook publishers and authors must involve the institution the author is affiliated to so as to minimise direct contractual confrontations between the authors and publishers.

Most importantly, research must precede any innovation of whatever magnitude and implementers must be involved at grass-root level to avoid tissue rejection, distortions or misunderstandings.

10. Conclusion

While the majority of Zimbabwean Collegians investigated have not yet experienced the plethora of practical dilemmas which many scholars have experienced elsewhere in their attempt to publish in an AJ as highlighted in this study, they are conscious of the pivotal role research plays in knowledge production in the government's attempt to innovate, transform and industrialise the economy through the HBE 5.0 Model. They are also alive to the fact that the mantra "publish or perish" as advocated for in this study, is for their academic survival in the international arena if they are to continue generating new knowledge peculiar to their environments meant to solve problems bedevilling their economies, communities and educational practice. Such research efforts demand an in-depth understanding of the HBE 5.0 philosophy, funding, incentives, recognition and socialisation if the practical dilemmas which hinder researchers to publish in AJs are to be experienced and minimised. Most importantly, making research meaningful to the

host community/province may generate research funding, an effort needful for job creation as envisioned in this study.

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Author Contributions

The author conceived and designed the study, conducted the literature review, collected and analysed the data, interpreted the findings, and prepared the manuscript. The author read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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