

Publish or Perish

Challenges and Prospects of Social Science Research and Publishing in Institutions of Higher Learning in Kenya

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Abstract

This article examines the challenges and prospects of social science research and publishing at two public universities in Kenya. Specifically, it interrogates the advances and bottlenecks of academic research and publishing by scholars at universities in low-resource settings. In such underresourced settings, publishing in international refereed journals (and books), which is the threshold for academic endorsement at Kenyan public universities, becomes a nearly impossible mission for most scholars, even the most gifted. This article has three objectives: to examine the link between teaching, research, and publishing; to explore the challenges of producing relevant and innovative publishable research literature; and to make quality research and peer-reviewed publishing relevant to local and global contexts. Through a survey study, the article attempts to shed light on the conflicts and dilemmas experienced by public university lecturers who are compelled to juggle heavy workloads, poor remuneration, consultancies, and parallel teaching with their research and publishing demands. Maseno and Kenyatta Universities have been selected to help provide examples for this analysis. Questionnaires containing open-ended questions were administered to 300 respondents consisting of university lecturers and postgraduate students. The information obtained via the questionnaires was validated through in-depth oral interviews of randomly selected respondents.