The African Science Indexation Projects and the Characteristics of African Scholarship and Scholarly Communication

Williams Nwagwu[1]

1.

willieezi@yahoo.com

A truly globalised world will carry, reflect and project the various degrees, variegation and diversity of content created and contributed by all human communities in the world, an expectation that is not happening. Despite the multi-sphere democracy believed to be promoted by information technology, evidence of increased access to education and increased production of research papers by scholars in Africa as well as increased number of initiatives to improve science visibility in the region, among others, what is known is that Africa has negligible presence in the global information space. Studies focusing on this subject matter omit the crucial question of the the exact status of knowledge production in Africa. An answer to this question does not exist.

In 2006 during September 6-8, the Council for the Development of Research in Africa (CODESRIA) based in Dakar, Senegal and Centre for African Studies of the University of Leiden in Holland, co-organised conference on electronic publishing in Africa. This author suggested that indexation of research in Africa is required to establish a true state of research production and performance in the region. A Consultative Forum held in Dakar during May 16-17 2008 was intended to examine the feasibility and the way forward for the project, which received a large scale publicity and acceptance by many scholars.

Four years have gone after the proposal, and three years after the Forum. It appears that what remains alive is the need to share the opinions of the stakeholders regarding the African Indexation Project. Based on series of interviews carried out since 2008, in combination with an ongoing survey on the Nigerian case, this paper is designed to examine the necessity of Africa local indexation, why local indexation experiments fail in Africa, and why the most recent effort also failed. Based on lessons learned and the opinions of senior scholars in the region, the paper identifies strategies to adopt in addressing the need to build an African Citation Index. Addressing these questions is very important to address the general low consciousness and deployment of science databases as a strategy for science management, and to further address issues relating low ranking accorded to African universities.