

BOOK REVIEW

Review of Special Edition of the *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2012

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I wish to thank the management team of the *African Journal of Reproductive Health* for the privilege to review its special edition, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2012. This brief review is in three parts. It begins with reflection on the state of knowledge production in Nigeria, followed by the review of Vol.12, No 2, 2012 of the journal. It concludes with some thoughts on the way forward if Nigerian scholars are to play a critical role in world scholarship as their forebears did four decades ago.

All is not well in Nigeria. The country's unwellness is not simply about bad governance but it also transcends all facets of life, - institutions, and groups. Consequently, Nigeria's higher education sub-sector which is presumably a major sector for knowledge production is currently in a poor state.

Nigeria's universities which were *believed to be at par* with those in the technologically developed countries in the 1960s according to Emeritus Professor J. Ade-Ajayi¹ are now among the lowest ranked in the world. No Nigerian university is listed among the top 500 in the world while they (i.e., universities) barely made the last twenty of 100 top universities in Africa. Even though the number of universities has quadrupled from a handful in the early 1960s to nearly 124 today (NUC, 2012)², there is no evidence of quality. This situation has gravely affected knowledge production. Indeed, knowledge production in the *true sense* of it in Nigeria's academia has precipitously declined. The reasons for this situation are not farfetched as will be discussed below.

Nigerian scholars are now notorious for various sharp practices. A sad trend among them is the

abandoning of the requirement of ensuring that the articles that are to be published in scholarly journals are peer reviewed, the comments from reviewers are sent to authors for revision before decision on acceptance is reached. This hallowed process is meaningless to many unscrupulous lecturers in Nigeria's universities nowadays. Lecturers simply establish or launch journals to peddle their articles that are not peer reviewed. Others are also known for bizarre racketeering. As example, lecturers in diverse locations or institutions establish or launch journals, network with one another by exchanging one another's articles for publication in self-sponsored journals. Often, the articles that are published in such journals are not peer reviewed.

It is also customary for lecturers/editors to send their articles to friends who are always inclined to recommend them for publication. Nigeria is therefore awash with journals with outlandish titles like *international journal of so and so* in order to give the impression that they (i.e., the journals) are of very good standing.

Another emerging trend is the tendency for home-based scholars to seek the support of Nigerian scholars in Diaspora in the laundering of works that are not peer reviewed. It is customary for the authors of such publications to pay hefty sums to cover publication/production.

The principal goal of the tactics that are discussed above is to obtain rapid promotion. It is therefore not surprising that these self-sponsored journals die as soon as they are launched. They cease to exist after those sponsoring them use their publications in various issues to manipulate their way to the top of the hierarchy (i.e., to become professors). The Appointment and Promotion

Committees of many worthwhile universities in our country are today concerned about the Volume I No 1 syndrome.

The above observations are not limited to scholarly articles but are also valid for many of the so-called scholarly books that are published by Nigerian scholars today. It is sad to say that many books that are not peer reviewed are printed by roadside printers. Book publishing has become a thriving industry to the embarrassment of serious scholars. These books often contain glaring and unpardonable flaws such as spelling, grammatical, stylistic, and/or factual errors. Paradoxically, such junk books are usually launched with so much fanfare by their authors. The traditional rulers, chiefs, and the town's people of the author/lecturer are invited to grace the occasion. Chief- and Co-launchers are always invited to donate generously. The Pastor or Imam of the author's congregation is also always on hand to bless the author while prayers are said for more grease to the author's/lecturer's doubtful product. All of these with media ratmatazz!!

It is therefore not surprising that home based Nigerian scholars are no longer seriously reckoned with in world scholarship. Nigerian scholars are no longer being featured in world class indexed journals. Indeed, scholars have resorted to local un-indexed journals out of the frustration arising from routine rejection by good standing international journals in various disciplines.

The atrocities that are being perpetrated by many "scholars" in Nigeria's institutions of higher learning today in the name of knowledge production have diminished their worth. Unlike in the past when they competed, and featured prominently in many high-brow and respected international journals, Nigerian scholars today have lost the steam. Few and very few are published in such authoritative and reputable international journals. This is Nigeria's tragedy.

It is against the backdrop of these preliminary comments that one considers the important role as well as the invaluable contribution of the *African Journal of Reproductive Health* to knowledge production in Nigeria in particular and the world at large. The journal is lifting Nigeria to greater heights.

It is an organ that meets the standard of any international journal that is worth its name and reputation. It is one of the very few peer reviewed journals published in Nigeria today. A search through the web reveals that the journal is among the very few indexed journal in the field of health sciences in sub-Saharan Africa.

The journal is interdisciplinary because it attracts contributors from disciplines in health and the social sciences. It is widely acclaimed as a good journal by scholars working on reproductive health issues, whether they are based in Nigeria/Africa or overseas institutions. It is therefore undeniably the flagship of health journals not only in Nigeria but sub-Sahara Africa.

Having said this much about the journal in general, let us now turn to the volume under review. Volume 16, Number 2, 2012 of the *African Journal of Reproductive Health* is a special edition which is devoted to the interplay between sexuality, sexual mores, reproductive health issues on the one hand and HIV/AIDS, the application of information technologies among adolescents and young persons in various contexts in, and parts of Africa on the other.

The edition under review incorporates nineteen articles excluding the editorial and a short piece by on a guest writer. With the exception of a paper that is single-authored, all other contributions in the volume are co-authored by two to five writers. The lead authors in the contributions in the volume are drawn from the following countries: Nigeria, Canada, Congo, Chad, USA, Tanzania, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. About 68% of the contributions are from outside Nigeria in contrast to 31.5% from Nigeria. The distribution of the articles in the volume underscores its international focus.

Sexuality and sexual mores issues are still under-researched in sub-Sahara Africa. The volume is about the sexuality of, and reproductive behaviours of young and adolescents in the diverse contexts in Africa. Empirical studies were conducted, using eclectic research methods to garner data on young and adolescents in all parts of the continent by the contributors. The papers shed light on the implications of their sexual behaviours on the spread of HIV/AIDS in the continent. HIV/AIDS continues to ravage the population in sub-Saharan Africa with the most at

risk being young persons between 15 and 45 years. Consequently, any work that focuses on sexual practices among this subgroup provides an opportunity for using the reported outcomes in the formulation of policy and design of programme-linked interventions that will ameliorate their situation and/or improve their health.

African Journal of Reproductive Health has through this volume lived up to expectations as a truly international interdisciplinary medium for scholarly works. The articles in the volume are rich, perceptive, and informative.

In concluding, it is necessary to reiterate the opening remarks on the place of journals in knowledge production in Nigeria today. *African Journal of Reproductive Health* in general and this volume in particular is a benchmark for all organs of this nature in Nigeria. Nigerian scholars can borrow a leaf from the excellent work of the editor

of the journal. The quality of its print is outstanding while the content is rich and illuminating. Above all, the journal is devoid of lapses such as grammatical and spelling errors that are often found in such organs (journals/books) in Nigeria.

It is a pleasure once again to review the journal and warmly commend the issue under review to scholars as well as to those who need to know about reproductive health issues across Africa.

References

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2. National Universities Commission (NUC) (2012), *Nigerian Accredited Universities*, Abuja: NUC.