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## EDITORIAL

**Background:** We keep emphasizing that research and publications are among the core functions of universities around the world. Unfortunately, only a tiny number of academic staff at most of the private universities in Tanzania are involved in research and the number of publications is very small. This is not acceptable. The editorial of this issue suggests that universities especially those owned privately need to go back to the drawing board to look for ways of changing the research and publication culture.

**Research Directorate:** It is important to establish a directorate for research that reflects what the institution is planning to achieve. In most cases, there is a mismatch between the structure and composition of staff in the research directorate vis-a-vis the list of functions attached to it. In addition, there must be scrutiny of the facilities required for such a directorate to be able to perform its duties without too much hustle.

**Realistic Research Budget:** Research activities and publications need funding. The first recommendation is to request these universities to establish a budget specific to research-related activities. This budget may change from time to time based on the financial situation of the university. There must be a committee that is responsible for the disbursement of research funds, not an individual. The initial budget should be able to cover the cost of writing large proposals, seek funding for small research activities, cover publication costs including page fees for journal articles, etc. The second recommendation is to support staff members financially who want to attend conferences to present papers if there is no other source of such support. These papers should be listed in the conference programme. If packaged well this can be a clear motivation for people to do research and write papers. Finally, the cash incentive should be introduced as a starting point intended to change the research culture. For instance, an amount of T. Shs 200,000/= per paper published can be a starting point.

**Capacity Building Workshops:** Most of the staff at these universities are juniors and their highest qualification is a Master. This implies that they will need support to be involved in research activities and publishing. It is recommended that these universities establish a workshop series aimed at capacitating the junior staff. Facilitators should be people from within the university to cut down costs unless nobody has the required skills. The suggested topics include: how to write a paper for publication; how to convert a dissertation to a journal article; how to improve writing skills; research methods, writing fundable research proposals, etc.

**Mentoring Programmes:** Junior members of staff should be encouraged to co-author their papers with senior members. If done with a good heart, a vertical mentoring programme can go a long way in developing the skills, experience, and confidence of junior staff members.

**Strong Postgraduate Programmes:** It is very difficult for a university to excel in research without establishing strong Master and PhD programmes.

**Clear Appointment and Promotion Criteria:** Although most universities have a clear policy for appointments and promotions stated in the HR Manual, its implementation is still problematic. Since each academic rank is attached to a certain number of units cumulated by publications, then it should be straightforward for a staff member to be promoted if she/he has enough units and no one should be in any academic rank if she/he has no enough units in his/her research portfolio. In addition, accelerated promotions should be introduced for those who are doing well in terms of publications and non-renewal of contracts should be applicable for those who do not publish unless there is good justification.

**Necessary Policies / Guidelines / Software:** Every university must have the following as a bare minimum - Research agenda; Research policy; Publication policy; Research Ethics Committee; Plagiarism policy; Institutional property rights policy; Institutional repository; Anti-plagiarism software; and Data analysis software.

**Other Ideas:** The following is the list of additional things which may motivate staff to be involved in research: 1) The universities need to establish a 'research day' for every academic staff member. Usually, academic staff members are busy every day of the week teaching which means there is no time for them to do research; 2) Staff need to be encouraged to create a culture of doing research as a team i.e. multidisciplinary; 3) Each faculty/school need to establish a list of journals that staff can concentrate on to avoid predator journals; 4) These universities should create research partnerships with the government, the industry, local and international NGOs; and 5) Universities need to organize national/regional/international conferences periodically.

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**Editor-in-Chief**