East African Journal of Management and Business Studies
EAJMBS January – March 2022, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 14-18
ISSN: 2799-2276 (Online). Published by G-Card
DOI: https://doi.org/10.46606/eajmbs2022v02i01.0006

The Role of Leadership, Financing and Academic Promotion toward Research Culture in Malawi's Higher Education Institutions

Dennis John Rabson Matekenya, PhD
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8933-1823
Country Director, ADRA Malawi
Email: dennis.matekenya@adra.org.mw

Abstract*:* The study sought to establish the role of leadership, financing and Academic Promotion toward research culture in Malawi's Higher Education Institutions. The study used the quantitative approach and particularly the descriptive correlational design whereby items in the questionnaire were in numbers for determining the perception of respondents and relating variables under investigation. The study used purposive convenient sampling method to identify 112 researchers from various countries including Malawi, Kenya, United States and Canada who had taught in Malawian Higher learning institutions to fill the questionnaire. The results of the Cronbach' alpha was .750 indicating high internal consistency of the instrument and the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was .739 which indicate that the instrument was valid and reliable. The study concluded that promotion into higher academic ranks is a better and significant predictor for research culture. If universities provide research-based promotions up the academic ladder, then the research culture would be realized and enhanced.

Keywords: Research Culture; Academic Promotion; Publication, Leadership, Research Financing.

How to cite: Matekenya, D. J. R. (2022). The Role of Leadership, Financing and Academic Promotion toward Research Culture in Malawi's Higher Education Institutions. East African Journal of Management and Business Studies *2(1),* 14-18. Doi: https://doi.org/10.46606/eajmbs2021v02i01.0006.

Introduction

Research practically means that someone is repeating a search for information and inherently assumes that the former search was not adequate and sufficient in a way that there is still room for improvement. Research is a common concept that refers to a quest for knowledge in a repeated fashion, again and again. In simple terms, re-search may be defined as a scientific and systematic investigation for relevant data on an area of interest (Kabir, 2016).

The many ways of acquiring knowledge include through tradition, authority, logical reasoning, experience, intuition, borrowing and the scientific method. Of these ways, the scientific method is the most sophisticated and reliable. Research is, at best, a process of data collection through formal and informal means, and processing it through systematic reasoning, following standards and generally accepted rules (Question.pro, 2022).

Culture refers to what people generally believe to be useful, values that hold them together, behavior that makes life meaningful and shared understanding of the way of life in a particular community, accepted to be the way of life. The Royal Society holds that research culture includes the practices, values, aspirations, attitudes and traditions of the research communities (University of Stirling – Research Culture Accessed May 2022).

Klemenkova (2017) reported that lecturers in Kazakhstan are not keen to update their knowledge and professional competencies through research undertakings as there is general research apathy. In Malawi, there has been an

increasing intensification of research activities with support from research organizations such as College of Medicine, Michigan State University, University of Liverpool, University of North Carolina, National Tuberculosis Control Program, just to mention a few who have been involved in research on a variety of topics (Kavinya, 2014).

Literature indicates a strong and positive relationship between the use of research-based knowledge and productive practice (Sherab, et al. 2015). Likewise, there is a strong and positive relationship between higher education research output and national economic growth. As Sherab and Schuelka (2019) argued, the absence of a rigorous research culture in the Bhutani, South Central Asia meant that most policies and practices are ideology-based and policymakers and academics have not been able to take advantage of research when designing policies.

Leadership and Research Culture

Leadership plays a crucial role in promoting research culture. According to Sherab and Schuelka (2019), leadership components in higher learning institutions include research skills and informed management practices. A robust and positive research culture begins with leadership which recognizes that research benefits to the community and not just the College or researchers in the learning institution. Institutional support for research is therefore very crucial in creating a research culture (Sherab & Schuelka, 2019).

Academic innovation at higher education institutions is quickly becoming a mainstream feature for faculty development, teaching and learning quality as well as effective entrepreneurial ventures. Efforts into innovative areas such as adaptive learning, pedagogical partnerships, technology enhancements and multimodal learning offer fertile ground for ongoing research (Blumenstyk & Gardner, 2019).

Financing and Research Culture

Without significant investment in building research capacity, not much research is likely to take place. Therefore, there has to be a clear policy that will guide research activities, training and support. This includes the presence of mentoring programs, continuing education courses, grant-writing support, research funding and support for PhD attainment (Hanover Research, 2014).

Iqbal, Jalal and Mahmood (2018) argue that Higher Education Commission in Pakistan provides research funding for research projects and publications in renowned research journals. Furthermore, Higher Education Commission provides teachers with training courses on research and gives incentives to those who attend these courses. While these efforts are made for developing research culture in universities, other countries should emulate the strategy.

Financial rewards based on publication outputs are an important means of accomplishing a quality research culture as argue by Iqbal, et al., (2018). John and Fanghanel (2015) further argued that research financing is a significant driver for research culture as resource availability motivates some researchers to meet research obligations and demands. Therefore, research financing is critical in developing institutional research culture.

Issues in Research

While leadership plays a critical role in creating a quality research culture in learning institutions, those researchers that are more experienced should play a leadership role in guiding and mentoring those with lower qualifications toward enhanced research productivity. Thus, senior-junior collaboration is highly anticipated for realization of enhanced higher learning research outputs. Higher learning leadership should focus on developing institutional capacity which is critical for enhanced research culture (Lemarchand & Schneegans, 2014). Blumenstyk and Gardner (2019) suggested that universities should work hard in creating an enhanced research culture and there must be intentional investments toward the research agenda.

Universities in Malawi do not appear to be rigorously involved in research although research is one of cornerstones for academic development, excellence and national development. According to Gondwe and Kavinya (2008), the number of articles published from Malawi had grown by 106% in the past ten years. While the results suggest there is growth in scientific publishing in Malawi, the main contribution is from foreign researchers residing in Malawi. Therefore, more needs to be done to promote publishing by Malawian authors. Based on this background, this study sought to investigate on the Role of Leadership, Financing and Academic Promotion

toward Research Culture in Malawi's Higher Education Institutions.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study used the quantitative approach and particularly the descriptive correlational design whereby items in the questionnaire were in numbers for determining the perception of respondents and relating variables under investigation.

Population and Sampling

The study used purposive convenient sampling method to identify 112 researchers from various countries including Malawi, Kenya, United States and Canada who had taught in Malawian Higher learning institutions to fill the questionnaire.

Validity and Reliability

The result of the Cronbach' alpha was .750 indicating high internal consistency of the instrument and the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was .739 which indicate that the instrument was valid and reliable.

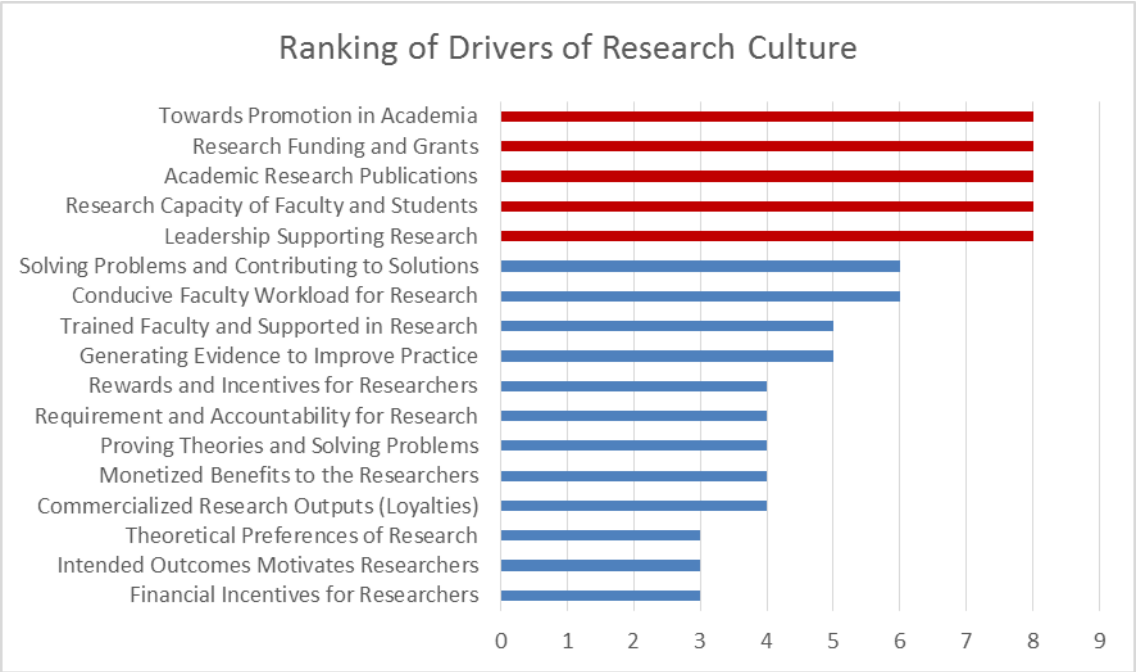

Figure 1: Drivers for research in Malawi

Results and Discussion

This section presents results based on the research questions that guided the study. The section starts by presentation of demographic characteristics.

Demographics of Respondents

Respondents' demographics were gender, reported age and level of education. Out of 112 total respondents, 77 were male (68.8%) while 35 were female (31.2%). Furthermore, 4 (3.6%) were below 31 years, 14 (12.5%) were above 31 and below 40, 31 (27.7%) were between 41 and 50 years old while 43 (38.4%) were aged between 51 and 60 years old while 18 (16.1%) respondents were above 60 years old. Ten (8.9%) respondents had bachelors' degrees while 49 (41.8%) had master degree and 53 (47.3%) had doctoral degrees.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are perceived drivers of research culture in Malawian universities?

Figure 1 shows that the most important drivers for research in Malawi are promotion in academia, academic publication, supportive leadership and manageable faculty workload. Therefore, leaders in educational institutions need to invest in supportive leadership that recognizes research based authorship so that those who publish can be promoted into higher ranks and in that way, the research culture will be enhanced. Furthermore, educational institutions need to ensure a satisfactory number of academic staff so that the lecturers may have manageable

teaching loads that will enable them to have time for research and publication activities.

Research Question 2: Is there a relationship between research culture and Publications, Capacity, Promotions, Leadership and Funding?

This research question called for testing of a null hypothesis which states: there is no significant relationship between research culture and Publications, Capacity, Promotions, Leadership and Funding? Results in table 1 show that there is a positive correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable. the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Table 1: Correlations

		Culture	Publications	Capacity	Promotions	Leadership	Funding
Research Culture	Pearson Correlation	1	.422**	.390**	.442**	.241*	.350**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.010	.000
	N	112	112	112	112	112	112

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.546[a]	.298	.264	.41806

a. Predictors: (Constant), Funding, Leadership, Capacity, Publications, Promotions

Table 3: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.849	5	1.570	8.982	.000[b]
	Residual	18.526	106	.175		
	Total	26.375	111			

a. Dependent Variable: Research Culture

b. Predictors: (Constant), Funding, Leadership, Capacity, Publications, Promotions

The table shows that there is a moderate correlation r=.422 between publications and research culture with the p-value of 001. The correlation between capacity and research culture is also moderate (r=.390) with the p-value of 001. There is a moderate correlation r=.442 between promotion and research culture with the p-value of .001. The correlation between promotion and research culture is the highest indicating that this is the strongest predictor of research culture. The correlation between leadership and research culture is the weakest (r=.241) with p-value of <.001 yet positive. There is also a positive and moderate correlation (r=350) between funding and research culture with the p-value of <.001. The results demonstrate positive relationships between the independent and dependent variables that are statistically significant. Similarly, previous research by Blumenstyk and Gardner (2019) recognized the value of financing research activities in order to enhance research culture in learning institutions. Furthermore, as Sherab and Schuelka (2019) indicated, institutional leadership is critical to the development of research culture in universities.

The summary table 2 shows that the overall correlation of Funding, Leadership, Capacity, Publications and Promotions with Research culture is .546. The R^2 is .298 which shows that the model with the full set of predictors explains approximately 30% of the changes in the Research Culture of the Universities.

Table 3 shows that the sum of squares for regression is 7.85 with 5*df.* The sum of squares for Residuals is 18.53 with 106*df.* The F statistic shows that the model with full set of predictors is statistically significant F[5,107]=8.98, *p*=<.001.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It is concluded that promotion into higher academic ranks is a better and significant

predictor for research culture. If universities provide research-based promotions, then the research culture would be realized and enhanced. Academic promotions based on publications would go a long way in fostering a research culture. Universities should therefore have robust academic promotions based of publications.

Research financing and research capacity are important drivers in creating research culture as no meaningful research can be carried out without financing and appropriate capacity. Therefore, higher education institutions should prioritize financing research and build research capacity for faculty and students to engage in meaningful research. Leaders in educational institutions need to invest in supportive leadership that recognizes research based authorship so that those who publish can be promoted into higher ranks and in that way, the research culture will be enhanced.

References

Blumenstyk, G. & Gardner, L. (2019). Innovation imperative: The buzz, the barriers and what real change looks like. The Chronicle of Higher Education.https://link.springer.co m/content/pdf/10.1007/s10755-021-09568-4.pdf.

Gondwe, M. and Kavinya, T. (2008). An analysis of Malawi\'s publication productivity. Malawi medical journal: the journal of Medical Association of Malawi. 20. 90-2. 10.4314/mmj.v20i3.10967.

Iqbal, M., Jalal, S. and Mahmood, K.(2018). Factors Influencing Research Culture in Public Universities of Punjab: Faculty Members' Perspective. Bulletin of Education and Research 40(3),187-200.

Hanover Research. (2014). Building a culture of research: Recommended practices. Washington, DC: Hanover Research. Accessed online: https://www.hanoverresearch. com/media/Building-a-Culture-of-Research-Recommended-Practices.pdf.John, P. and Fanghanel, J. eds., (2015). Dimensions of marketisation in higher education. London: Routledge.

Kabir, S. M. (2016). Introduction to Research. Retrieved from Https://Www. Researchgate.Net/Publication/325846733 _Introduction_To_Research.

Kavinya, Thengo (2014) Conference Report: Research in Malawi and its contribution to global science. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih. gov/pmc/articles/PMC4248048/pdf/MMJ 2603-0100.pdf.

Klemenkova, K. (2017, February 27). Useless science: Kazakhstani scientists will never catch up with Nigerian and Ethiopian scientists [Bespoleznaya nauka: uchenym Kazahstana ne dognat Nigeriyu i Efiopiyu]. Available from https://365info.kz/2017/ 02/kazahstan-zavalil-mirovoe-soobshh estvobespoleznymi-nauchnymi-statyami/ [Accessed May 2022].

Lemarchand ,GA and Schneegans, S. (2014). Mapping Research and Innovation in the Republic of Malawi. Science, Technology and Innovation Policy. unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002288/228807E .pdf. Accessed May 2021.

Iqbal, Muhammad, Samreen Jalal and Khalid Mahmood, (2018). Factors Influencing Research Culture in Public Universities of Punjab: Faculty Members' Perspective. Bulletin of Education and Research 40(3),187-200.

Sherab, K., *Dorji*, K., Dukpa, D., *Lhamo*, K., *Thapa*, R., & *Tshomo*, S. (*2015*). Opportunities and challenges of implementing inclusive education in Bhutanese schools: A case study. Report prepared for UNICEF-Bhutan.

Sherab, K. & Schuelka, M. (2019). The Value of Research Culture. 5. 72-83. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333485667_The_Value_of_Research_Culture/citation/download.

University of Stirling – Research Culture Accessed May 2022 https://www.stir.ac.uk/research/research-culture/#:~:text=The%20Royal%20Society%20say%20%E2%80%9CResearch,research%20is%20conducted%20and%20communicated.%E2%80%9D.