

---

---

## Assessment of Scholarly Publications: Quest for an Internationalised Standard

By

**Afolabi, Samson Sunday**

Department of Science Education  
Faculty of Education  
National Open University of Nigeria  
14/16, Ahmadu Bello Way  
Victoria Island, Lagos  
E-mail: [safolabi@noun.edu.ng](mailto:safolabi@noun.edu.ng)

---

---

### ABSTRACT

*The world is thinking much about globalising the nations into a global village. Ideas like globalised economy, global or common currency, and gradual removal of trade tariffs and reduced restriction human movement. Education is believed to have a role to play. Globalised curriculum is a thought in the direction that education can enhance globalisation. A dimension in the role of education to support this goal is a unified or global standard of assessment of scholarly publications for staffing and promoting academics in tertiary institutions. Scholarly publication is the life wire of an academic. 'Publish or perish' is a common saying among academia particularly in Nigeria. This underscores the importance of publishing research reports in the academia. This paper considered the area of rating and assessing the scholarly publications of the academic. The present rating scales existing among some institutions for the purpose of promotion were discussed. The paper suggested the internationalised or common denomination of assessment in the area of grading and referencing. The benefits of communication with understanding of status, unbiased assessment, and erosion of inferiority-superiority complex were argued in favour of internationalised grading standard. These benefits were considered as opportunity for mobility of an academic across international institutions without relegation of status. Implications of internationalisation of assessment in mathematics education were considered appropriate and can be readily adopted because mathematics is universal.*

**Key Words:** Publication, Internationalisation, Assessment, Academic

### INTRODUCTION

A publication may be referred to as writing made open to the public in order to pass information on a particular matter. It may be in form of news as obtainable in the daily newspapers, books, journals and periodicals. The Cambridge English Dictionary- online (n.d.) defined a publication as the act of making information or stories available to people in either printed or electronic version. A scholarly or academic publication is different from journalistic or any other forms of publications. They are writings in which scholarship relating to a specific academic discipline (Wikipedia, 2019). Before an article or writing is considered as scholarly writing, it has to meet some conditions. The publication must be evidence-based. It does not exist

in a free-lance form in that it does not stand in a vacuum; it has to be based on previous related research reports. According to Jonkoping University (n.d.), past research is used as a starting point but is critically investigated and developed further so that the new researcher builds his new knowledge on the existing ones. A scholarly publication cites previous researchers in the related area. Thorough review stage by other academic who can review and suggest ideas that will improve the write-up is carried out most often. There are different kinds of review to which an article for scholarly publications are subjected. According to Elsevier (2019), this may include open review, single-blind review or double-blind peer review etc. A context of framework has to be established and learning theory (for research in education) has to be alluded. Scholarly writing aims at solving a particular problem created by nature or human being when the problem has been identified (Nasela, 2017). Scholarly writing can be published in a book, or chapter contributions into the book by different authors, journal, proceeding, monogram or patent. These may be virtual or paper form.

The three roles of an academic is teaching, research and community development. Research has been described according to Visali (2011) as systematic efforts made to explore a situation or to solve a problem in order to validate an existing knowledge or discover a new one. There are various types of research endeavours in which an academic can be engaged. The various types of classification depend on focus of classification. According to Zamir (2015), two main classes of research were identified. 1) Classification according to purpose, and 2) classification according to method. The types of research classified according to purpose include; i) basic or applied research, ii) research and development, iii) evaluation research. In research classified according to method, the following were identified; i) historical research, ii) descriptive research and iii) experimental research.

The aftermath of research findings and reporting is publishing. The results of the findings has to be made known to the learned community through renowned publisher of academic writings. This may be in a journal, proceeding, book or monograph. Those findings that are ground breaking may be patented if the author pleases to do so. A publication may be local or international. The concept of international publication may be a bit varying from one institution to another. However, for a publication to be termed international, it is not just by its name, some of the basic requirements include: 1) that the article is published in a journal outside the author's country, it is possible that a journal is hosted in the country of the author. It is also reckoned as international publication if any of the following conditions are met. 1) A majority of the contributing authors must be from different countries; 2) The editorial board must not be localised within a country, a good number of them has to be from different countries. If the journal meets any of the conditions above, it can be called an international publication. A local publication does not meet any of the conditions above.

Research report writing in education for publication depends on the type of article the author is embarking on. In this category, the article may be a position paper (also called theoretical or expository paper) or empirical paper. An empirical paper is that in which the author collect data, analyse the data and give report. An empirical paper may be an experimental study or survey. In a position paper, the author attempts to make an exposition on certain matter, belief or value system to bring out an argument for or against a policy, principle or practice. In most

cases this is loaded to matter of policy. A theoretical paper critically looks at how things are done, make analysis of the situation and then make suggestions in form of addendum or erratum on the existing practice. Each of theoretical or empirical paper has its own pattern of writing.

Publications are important instruments used in academia to determine how much an academic is diligent in contributing to knowledge through research, which is one of the three roles of an academic. Publications are also used to rank an institution internationally (Moed and Halevi, 2014). According to Moed and Halevi (2014), research assessment is a continuous activity for improving an institution and that it is a part of scientific activities. Ewell (2009) made a distinction between internal and external assessment of scholarly publications. He considered an internal assessment as that carried out on the students in order to improve pedagogical activities. The external assessment is that used to determine accountability on the part of an institution. A favourable research assessment in this area is considered a reflection of good use of fund by the university to promote research, publication in order to improve learning. Before promotion is earned, an individual academic submits his/her publications when he/she is due for it and when the institution calls for the annual promotion. The institution assesses and rates the publications of the candidate (the staff). A cumulative score of the candidate is compared with the set standard for promotion to that level in the university. This majorly determines whether the staff will be promoted or not. It is incontrovertible that the same instruments (publications) are used all over the world to rate and promote the academic staff from one cadre of the profession to another. The way an institution rates a particular article in a publication differ from one institution to another.

For example, a university awards a maximum of 3points for a journal publication while another awards maximum of 5 points for the same publication. Where there is a single author as in the first case of 3 points, the full point is awarded while 1.5 points, 0.33 points is awarded where there are 2 and 3 authors respectively. In the second case in which maximum of 5 points is awarded for a single author, the same number of points is awarded to other co-authors across board irrespective of the number of authors. In addition, the number of points required to move from one level to another also differ among universities. For example, a University may require to promote her staff from lecturer I to senior lecturer with minimum of 24 points whereas another may require 36 points to effect the promotion to the same level. An example is drawn here (table 1) from two Universities in Nigeria.

**Table 1:** A Comparative Analysis of Ratings for Assessed Publications in Two Universities in Nigeria

S/N	Publications	University	Max. Points	No. of Authors and their Scores*				
				Single	2	3	4	5
1	Journal	A	5	5	2.5	1.67	1.25	1
		B	3	3	1.5	1	0.75	0.6
2	Proceedings	A	2	2	1	0.67	0.5	0.4
		B	2	2	1	0.67	0.5	0.4
3	Book	A	3	3	1.5	1	0.75	0.6
		B	5	5	2.5	1.67	1.25	1

S/N	Publications	University	Max. Points	No. of Authors and their Scores*				
				Single	2	3	4	5
4	Research-Based book	A	10	10	5	3.33	2.5	2
		B	na	-	-	-	-	-
5	Chapter in a Book	A	3	3	1.5	1	0.75	0.6
		B	2	2	1	0.67	0.5	0.4
6	Creative work	A	5	5	2.5	1.67	1.25	1
		B	2	2	1	0.67	0.5	0.4
7	Sculpture	A	10	10	5	3.33	2.5	2
		B	na	-	-	-	-	-
8	Monogram	A	2	2	1	0.67	0.5	0.4
		B	na	-	-	-	-	-
9	Patents	A	5	5	2.5	1.67	1.25	1
		B	5	5	2.5	1.67	1.25	1

\*Equal contributions of authors assumed

na = not available

Table 1 above shows the type of scholarly publications each university will accept for the promotion of her staff. The associated ratings (points) of each publication in the different universities are shown as maximum points. The table above also shows that in University A the maximum points obtainable for a journal publication is 5 points and in University B, the same article is rated as maximum of 3 points. The 5 or 3 points are divided equally among the number of authors in both cases.

The underlying assumption here is that they contributed equally; If not the points to be awarded to each author will be according to the proportion of his percentage contribution. For example, a situation where the maximum score is not awarded to an article in a journal, say 2 points is awarded to an article with 3 authors; an author who contributed 40% is awarded 40% of 2 points, which is 0.8 points. In University A, nine different kinds of publications are listed as presentable for promotion while only six of these are available for promotion in University B. Monogram, research-based book and sculpture are not given special place for consideration in University B.

The weights attributable to a publication may not necessarily mean stringent or being liberal. The determinant of this is the number of points required to be promoted from one level to the next. This is shown below in table 2 for the two Universities.

**Table 2:** Number of Points Required to be Promoted from one Level to the Next in the Two Universities

s/n	From	To	University A	University B
1	Assistant Lecturer	Lecturer II	5 points	6 points
2	Lecturer II	Lecturer I	8 points	12 points
3	Lecturer I	Senior lecturer	20 points	24 points
4	Senior lecturer	Associate Professor	50 points	42 points
5	Associate Professor	Professor	70 points	66 points

In University B, the points are fairly distributed among the levels more than in University A. With the information presented, it is obvious that the condition in University A is easier than in B. The management of the institution best knows the rationale for differences in gaps between levels. Some of the reasons could be to control personnel at one level as the University may dim fit. Every University has the full autonomy to promote and how to promote her staff or otherwise. The variation in rating scholarly writings is not a problem in education rather it is an issue. The universities can run without a unified assessment and rating system, however it is an issue in education. It is not out of order to make a discourse on issues in education. In some quarters the idea of internationalisation of curriculum is been discussed. Thus, this view corroborates the idea behind this study. Therefore, it is within the same context of internationalisation of rating and assessing scholarly publications are brought to light. For lack of common denomination, some institution feels superior and may feel sceptical in accepting (say) an associate professor from an institution to his or her own as associate professor. There is a thought of scaling down his level. The highest qualification in academics is doctor of philosophy, becoming a professor is attained through scholarly publications. If a common rating style is internationally adopted this will validate the promotion of any academic and there will be acceptance without bias inferiority-superiority complex. Internationalisation of rating standard will enhance meaningful communication with understanding.

Steps to ensure internationalisation of assessment of scholarly publications is to begin at the national level. In Nigeria, there is the insinuations and believe that some institutions make their assessment cheap. It is believed that when an institution needs accreditation, they open up their door for cheap standard in promotion. In private tertiary institution, assessment of scholarly publication and promotion of the academic is thought to be of low standard and cheap. A unified standard of rating will remove any doubt on status and standard in academia. When the nationalised rating standard is achieved in the Universities in the country, then the academic community can make efforts to pray for an internationalised rating and assessment of scholarly writing.

## CONCLUSION

An internationalisation of rating and assessment of scholarly publication is a step towards integration and globalisation. It will also build a united academic front and confidence among academic society. It will erase dichotomisation and polarisation in academic community of the world. The starting point for internationalisation of assessment of rating of scholarly publication is firstly by starting it with all the universities in the country.

## REFERENCES

- Afolabi, S. S. (2017). Role of Mathematics as Change agent for National Development. *Proceeding of 54<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the Mathematical Association of Nigeria*. Cambridge University, (n.d.). Publication- meaning. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/publication>. Cambridge University Press. Elsevier. (2019). what is peer review? <https://www.elsevier.com>. Downloaded 6/3/19.

- Ewell, P. (2009). Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Revisiting the Tension. <http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/occasionalpaperone.htm>. Retrieved, 3/3/14.
- Jonkoping University. (n.d.) Scholarly Publications – an introduction. <https://ju.se/library/search-write/scholarly-publications---an-introduction.html>. Retrieved on 2/8/18.
- Moed, H. F. and Halevi, G. (2014) the multidimensional Assessment of Scholarly Research Impact. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*. 30. Available at <https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1406/1406.5520.pdf>. Downloaded on 28/7/18
- Nasela, P. (2017). Students’ and Supervisors’ Research Culture as Predictors of the Quality of Undergraduate Thesis in Benue State University, Makurdi- Nigeria. *African Journal of Theory and Practice of Educational Research, AJTPER*. 4, pp168-181.
- Visali, K. (2011) what is Research? Various Types of Research. Available at <https://www.slideshare.net/vaisalik/types-of-research>. Downloaded 28/7/18
- Wikipedia. (2019). Academic Journal. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>. Downloaded 6/3/19.
- Zamir S. (2015). Classification of Research by purpose and methods. Available at <https://www.slideshare.net/shaziazamir3/classification-of-research-by-purpose-method>. Downloaded on 28/7/18.