Factors hampering the credibility of research studies

Lawrence Tshivhase

Abstract

Higher education institutions command a front position in developing human capital. These institutions foster authoritative knowledge in line with the formidable needs of the country’s economy. In emerging economies, education remains the spine for sustainable development and the means for tackling high unemployment levels. Sophisticated research to discover and galvanise innovative concepts cannot be underrated when facilitating these targets. Although institutions have introduced policy to broaden knowledge, there are still many challenges from key stakeholders. This article reveals how participants; tertiary institutions; supervisors; researchers and examiners affect the credibility and contribution of research findings. It is revealed that the promotion of personal importance overwrites the genuine interest of high-level research findings. For instance, academic institutions may principally harvest many graduates without seriously considering the quality of the final product. Some researchers nowadays are also allowed to register for research projects without fully demonstrating passion to increment academic breakthrough. These disappointing trends continuously depress the role of research institutions. Subsequently, some research institutions are confronted with academic shortcomings because of their shrinking academic criteria. This deters academic innovation from liberating countries from inefficiencies.

Keywords: academic research; academic integrity; research team; research process

Introduction

Education has the fundamental characteristics to respond to the challenges that many countries are faced with. It is education that touches the life of individuals and improves the overall economic development (Michaelowa, 2000). Economists suggest that enormous investments in education are important catalysts of economic growth (Dickens, Sawhill and Tebbs, 2006). Advanced education plays a paramount role in generating new philosophies (International Institute for Educational and Planning, 2007) and in catching up with more sophisticated technology (Bloom,
Canning & Chan, 2006). Knowledge-based competition underlines the importance of higher education for development and growth (Bloom et al., 2006). This puts higher learning institutions in a leading position when dictating the development of necessary knowledge. Such knowledge strengthens countries to match their different developmental goals.

Persistent growth in research output has been a major achievement in academic research over the past two decades (Vincent-Lancrim, 2006). Academic research can be described as research and development (R&D) carried out in higher education. Over the past decades, R&D has grown rapidly, and this represented for roughly 80% of R&D expenditures in the world (Vincent-Lancrim, 2006). Academic research fundamentally establishes a wide range of knowledge associated with human, nature, society, culture and other applications. Although research can manifest in different forms, it is science, humanities, economy, and social and business research that is most prominent. These research types are designed to establish new phenomena and applications; and to verify existing theories and applications. It is clear that research is a progressive step towards realising knowledge-based wealth and success. In turn, it generates cutting-edge knowledge to make the world more predictable.

The distinct relationship between R&D and the sustainable economic growth of countries must be recognised. This is frequently unveiled in developed countries with high expertise for high-level research. These would be typically advanced countries where economies have grown steadily in line with the discovery of new ideas and technologies. This sharply contrasts with developing countries, where high-level research is restrained in uplifting economic performances to greater heights. Although some developing countries have advanced in terms of their capacity to successfully execute sophisticated research, many struggle to complement academic research.

It is a well-documented fact that academic institutions continue to harvest a large number of master and doctoral students. The question is how practical are those qualifications in tackling the major needs of the country? A good example is a situation wherein several research studies miss out on great opportunities to make
ever-lasting breakthroughs. It is important to deliberate on this because some academic investigations restrict study designs. As a result, many research projects no longer live up to academic expectations. They ultimately make a lean impact on the advancement of academic success.

This paper aims to establish current complications that hinder the quality of academic research. The aim is to expose key factors that degenerate the credibility of academic investigation. The hypothesis at the root of this article is that guidelines must be instituted to reinvent the respect that traditionally commanded the approval of good research.

**Problem Statement**

High-level research plays an important role in developing knowledge-based procedures as a contributing measure to change traditional ways of performing assignments. This leads to improved efficiencies. In spite of this, many research projects in emerging countries attain trivial success and do not overcome the hitches that fetter sustainable economic growth and development. In spite of substantial growth in registration numbers at all levels of research studies, the effect of education on this level in terms of efficiency and development must be challenged (Michaelowa, 2000). There is a need to cultivate practical mechanisms to appraise these programmes.

The primary causes of groundless research investigations are associated with insignificant outputs. As such it adds no substantial value to generating academic knowledge. Although the foundation of quality education was imposed by pre-tertiary education improvement, some problems at higher learning institutions originate due to poor research management. The ultimate outcome is that the recognised quality of the research findings are demoted. These challenges compromise the approved academic processes behind reliable research. In this article, tertiary institutions, supervisors, researchers, participants and examiners receive much scrutiny. These clusters are exposed as influential barriers to credible quality research. The promotion of self-interest may even suppress the main purpose of capturing valuable findings. To put it differently, stakeholders’ welfare is industriously considered and as a result they inhibit academic investigation’s purpose of founding new concepts.
### Major Steps of the Research Process

Academic research compels essential procedure to guarantee the successful completion of credible investigation. The research process is a series of linked stages, which are usually adopted when executing research projects (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003). These stages are pre-planned to provide applied guidelines to researchers so that they can remain objective while performing research. The figure below provides fundamental compulsory steps for conducting research. The appropriate manner to start efficacious research and eliminate potential research bias is to adhere to these steps. This is an important process since many academic studies have been carelessly disintegrated by overlooking these stages. This usually results in suspicion on the integrity of the research findings.

![Major Steps in the Research Process Diagram](image)

**Figure 1: Major Steps in the Research Process**

**Step One:** The first step is to identify and define the research problems. According to Blumberg (2005), a research dilemma compels the researcher to determine how the problem can be addressed. Once the problem is clearly defined, research questions (that need to be answered to arrive at long-lasting solutions) are developed. If the research problem is vague, there is a high probability of compromising the significance of the study. This challenge is to confront people who start investigations without deeply understanding the research problem. In order to
respond to predetermined questions, comprehensive investigation is needed to search the root cause of the problem. While this step is vital, the main objectives of the study should also be clearly underlined. This is necessary to ensure that the study focus is not misguided throughout the research process.

**Step Two:** When research problems and objectives are clearly understood, the researcher is expected to draw up comprehensive research proposals to fully illustrate how the research would be accomplished. The research proposal is written by the researcher and provides a detailed description of the proposed programme. Research proposals determine whether the study is worth pursuing or not. The research proposal outlines the entire research programme and summarises information to the reader. At the core of a good research proposal is deep insight into the existing literature in line with the presented research topic.

To summarise, research proposals provide details about the following: Research problems; research questions; research strategy, research time frame; research budget; sampling; data collection methods; data analysis and interpretation, and limitations, among other things. Insignificant deliberation on these issues is likely to negate the fluent implementation of the research.

**Step Three:** The research design is a systematic plan to study a scientific problem. The design of a study defines the study type (descriptive, correlational, semi-experimental, experimental, review, meta-analytic). The research design also includes hypotheses, independent and dependent variables, experimental design, data collection methods, and a statistical analysis plan. Realisation of the best research design reduces misperception during the actual execution of the investigation. According to Cooper and Schindler (2011), the research design can be best explained as follows:

- A blueprint for the collection, measurement, analysis of data;
- The plan and structure of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions;
- Aids the researcher in the allocation of limited resources by posing crucial choices in methodology; and
• An expression of both the structure of the research problem.

Step Four: Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion. Data collection enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. A wide range of data collection methods exists. The selection of data collection method largely determines how data is gathered (Blumberg, 2005). The selection of each method also greatly depends on its appropriateness to meet the study objectives. The most common data collection techniques are the questionnaire and interview. The type of data collection method actually depends on whether the data collected embraces qualitative or quantitative research approaches. Once a data collection method has been selected, the researcher is expected to collect data from potential participants. Despite the collection of primary data, some research studies can adopt the gathering of secondary data, if such data is sufficient to help to solve research problems. In this step, the research can be sacrificed if the collected data is prejudiced. This happens when a research tampers with the collected information in order to reach an encoded outcome.

Step Five: The step following data collection involves capturing, analysing and interpreting the data. Data analysis is the process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision making. Data analysis has multiple facets and approaches, and encompasses diverse techniques, under a variety of names, in different business, science, and social science domains. Data analysis reduces accumulated data to a manageable amount, and it also develops summaries and looks for patterns for statistical analysis (Blumberg, 2005). Using data analysis methods is fundamental in academic research. This step paves the way towards attaining research findings. However, this step can also become a step where the integrity of the research findings may be completely compromised. It is of the utmost importance that analysers are closely monitored in this step. This is necessary so that the study will remain objective and free from unethical meddling. Supervisors are anticipated to be markedly at the forefront to safeguard that research findings are not dented. Individuals may try to falsify the true reflection of the findings if they have already (beforehand) decided on the discoveries. Therefore,
researchers are compelled to remain focused during this stage of data analysis and interpretation.

**Step Six:** Once data has been interpreted, researchers are required to report on the research findings. It is important to prepare a report to generate the findings and recommendations for the intended purpose of decision making (Blumberg, 2005). The findings and recommendations are in line with the research questions that were developed during the previous stage. The findings are expected to respond to the main research problem that made it possible for the study to be conducted. Guidance from supervisors is of the utmost importance to match initial propositions. This is to certify that the study meets academic reasoning. Ethical issues that may surface during the reporting stage must also be strictly monitored. This is because subjective reporting may ignore the significance of the overall conclusions. The verification of the findings based on the interpretation of the data is crucial at this point.

**The role of academic institutions**

The durability of academic research depends highly on tertiary institutions’ ability to foster best practices when conducting important investigations. This is because most complications associated with attaining the best research practices are attributed by academic institutions. Although the minimum requirements to assess the academic competencies of would-be researchers are established, these requirements can be lowered to accommodate larger numbers of candidates. This is a serious concern because students may want to register for high-level research studies despite failing to adhere to the minimum requirements. These students can in fact compel academic leaders to consider them despite their insignificant academic history. Decisions to upraise revenue and meet the targeted number of students play an influential part in this instance. Academic institutions always have established stringent guidelines to set minimum requirements. Dishonouring those stringent guidelines can severely devalue the merit of studies.

Once again, a research proposal is the decisive part of the research process (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003). It can be designated as a systematic document that delivers the research plan by accentuating compliance with the academic
procedures. A well prepared proposal clearly explains the research objectives without subjectivity. It is obligatory in research institutions that proposals are given the greatest scrutiny in justifying the prospects of proposed studies. However, to a certain degree, this can be spurned by a number of institutions. Students can submit proposals that do not actually go through an assessment process by an academic research committee before it is approved. As a result, poorly written proposals that lack academic innovations can encumber the achievement of significance findings. Putting less attention on the importance of research proposals then becomes an obstruction towards conducting a valuable investigation.

The role of national research institutions
The development of national research institutions to advance research studies continues to support positive growth. These institutions typically complement the advancement of a country by generating a large number of masters and doctoral degrees. Although this is considered a milestone and highly commended, less attention is wagered in terms of research quality to uplift the country. This is because some research findings do not contribute much to the body of knowledge and to industries in general. Overlooking the tangible contribution of research exceptionally contributes to downgrading the significance contribution that research studies can make. Evidently, this exemplifies that, while many research studies are concluded, they lack the practicality to advance national developmental goals.

Although national research institutions are determined to endorse larger numbers of graduates, they are not entirely involved in selecting research topics that are sufficiently authoritative to compensate national developmental strategies. These bodies chronically inject more funds into academic institutions without showing good leadership. They even lack commitment in the timeous assessment of proposals to ensure that apportioned funds endorse national visions. Producing large numbers of graduates is not the ideal approach if research studies turn out to be insignificant.

There is an urgent need to re-examine the manner in which national research bodies finance academic studies. The impression is that large sums of money are wasted annually on research that in fact does not benefit anyone. The sole beneficiaries in this regard are the graduates. It is emphasised that more stringent measures are
required to avoid duplication of unworthy investigations. This will scale down wasteful expenditure, allow an innovative culture, and stimulate individual intellectual upliftment through the promotion of world-class studies.

**Research contributors**

The successful execution of academic research requires the involvement of different role players. This implies that no single individual can implement all the responsibilities without the involvement of the research team. Key stakeholders in academic research usually include participants; supervisors; co-supervisors; researchers; and examiners. All of these clusters can unfavourably affect the credibility research findings. Promoting personal ambitions at the expense of transparent procedures can also hamper the major objectives of research. Even though stakeholders are projected to act ethically, their egotistic orientations may outperform the significance of the study, especially if they are not well-monitored. This can also be aggravated if the entire research process is hurried. As a result, coherent procedures will collapse.

**External participants**

A number of research studies compel researchers to gather data from potential research participants. Before participants can partake through either an interview or a questionnaire, they are required to sign an informed consent form to agreeing to conform to the set procedures. Complications can transpire when participants provide inconsistent information as this would compromise the authenticity of the research. Participants might do so to camouflage sensitive information. It nonetheless is prohibited for a researcher to disclose information to anyone. The use of pseudonyms is highly preferred to obscure participants’ names.

Participants can also supply ambiguous information to depict that they are in better position because of self-importance. Such information may include pretending to have higher qualifications, superior experience, appropriate expertise, and better financial standings, either in a personal capacity or organisational capacity. Because of conceit, such details can be very deceptive when constructing the broader research findings. Subsequently, the challenge that remains is how to improve research studies by ensuring that participants provide honest information at all times.
In addition, researchers can interfere with the respondent’s feedback, which could then be regarded as conflict of interest. Keenness to arrive at particular findings before the study is concluded can also become a contributing factor that could coerce a researcher to act unethically.

Supervisors
Supervisors serve as the point of referral in which research studies are grounded. It is compulsory for academic institutions to apportion experienced and qualified supervisors to supervise researchers. Due to the duties assigned to supervisors, they can restrain the production of quality investigations. In this case, leaders become highly engrossed in producing the most number of graduates while negating the importance of the study. Supervisors who keep an eye on the huge financial rewards if they produce many graduates may contribute to a decline of quality in the final research product. In some cases, supervisors become more absorbed in upgrading their titles so as to be seen as a radical landmark.

These leaders are likely to not preserve sufficient time to systematically and objectively go through the preliminary findings. This would typically leave a researcher’s thesis with many undetected blunders that, in turn, may be detrimental to their profession. Even though it is beneficial to produce many graduates, research supervision should always be done without rebuffing the broad objectives of the study. The reality is that some supervisors do not lead by example because they allow their egocentric interests to daunt the entire research project. These individuals can also be tempted to interfere with the findings in an attempt to make the study more attractive. It is therefore challenged that supervisors be honest and protect the integrity of studies instead of placing their irrational interests before an entire research team. Rivalry between supervisors to produce the largest number of students may compromise the quality of a thesis too.

Co-supervisors
The requirements for accomplishing master and doctoral degrees oblige institutions to appoint co-supervisors to work collaboratively with supervisors. This prearrangement ensures that co-supervisors assist both researchers and supervisors in gauging the research findings. Feedback from co-supervisors is vital
to ensure that no research void is left. While co-supervisors may be of worth, some may be reluctant to contribute to the research because of their own overcommitment. In general, there have been many theses produced globally where co-supervisors did not contribute at all. Yet, if one looks at the final thesis, their names appear as if they have contributed meaningfully. If this culture continues to be a norm among many institutions it will undermine research. The following is strongly disputed: If co-supervisors are not equipped to contribute to research, they should rather excuse themselves, because this sends a misleading message. Likewise, it also compromises the uniqueness of the findings because one of the parties has failed to accomplish his or her assigned duties.

**Researchers**

The production of high qualifications (master and doctoral degrees) is crucial at all times. Certainly, this indicates the advancement of research capabilities within different countries. The obstacle though is researchers who enter academic circles for useless drives. The most demoralising stimulus is where potential researchers do research to amend their titles or names. These so-called researchers normally contribute little to the body of knowledge. Their existence seems a failure to them if they do not hold a commanding title or two. Appalling circumstances are created whereby people incorrectly forecast that the possession of higher research degrees makes one unparalleled. Even so, many people with such degrees still perform responsibilities that could be easily be completed by a person with a junior degree. Some are incapable of assembling a document without paying for assistance.

It is not unusual to find many graduates who obtained higher degrees soliciting bribes to get assistance from certain individuals. They usually pretend that they are superintelligent, whereas this is a misrepresentation from the truth. These people catastrophically fail to understand that qualifications alone are not panaceas to recognition. It is high time that those who register for research studies start to think prudently before they dream the impossible. People should first determine whether they have a passion for research because in the process they need to be able to advance the culture of profitable learning and tackle academic shortcomings.
Examiners
The appointment of examiners to assess completed theses can also contribute negatively to the endorsement of final product. This is because an extended network of supervisors probably endorse examiners with whom they are closely affiliated. Generally speaking, this creates a serious conflict of interest because the assessment may disregard the chief objectives of the study. If such a thesis is to be examined by a different person, he or she might arrive at a different conclusion. So far, there continues to be a testing challenge among institutions to ensure that selected examiners operate completely independently. It is encouraged that examiners be independent and allowed enough space to apply their academic discretion without interference. In other words, examiners must be given sufficient time to do their part. If examiners are dissatisfied with the work, recommended adjustments must be made to improve any academic discrepancy. With regard to doctoral degrees, students are expected to do defend their theses so that they can meet with their examiners for the first time. The problem is that some institutions do not conduct this important part of the study. There should be greater commitment to ensure that all processes are followed.

Factors that negatively affect the quality of research studies
A wide range of factors can unfavourably infringe the advantage of academic research. Factors such as the unavailability of qualified scholars, purpose of the research, financial matters, and ethical issues can emerge and suddenly affect the success rate of academic studies. Upholding the fundamental role of these factors is of great importance when undertaking research. A brief summary of each factor follows:

Unavailability of qualified academics
A number of tertiary institutions simply has scarce human capital to produce credible research studies. The dilemma is when poorly capacitated universities are keen to introduce high-level academic qualifications to misrepresent their ability to compete with the best universities that have acquired highly qualified intellectuals. This reality downgrades the quality of academic research because supervisors with limited research knowledge are given mammoth responsibilities beyond their academic capabilities. These individuals are likely to neglect the proper processes of durable
research. Transparent study supervisors must be allocated. To sum up, unqualified academics can be tempted to act unethically because they may not be fully accountable to professional ethics.

*Unclear objective or purpose of a study*

The rationality of a research project is that the main research objective must be clear. Such unambiguity provides constructs that respond to the objectives. The major challenge occurs when a number of researchers start to think about research without any discreet research motivation. Due to this, a number of concluded research projects lack substance in contributing beneficially to academic learning. This problem can be shifted to universities that recruit supervisors who lack research experience. They are sometimes not sufficiently equipped to ensure that the research problem, research objectives and the overall research significance are fully understood. As a starting point, there should be a proper research process to warrant that the proposed research meets academic reasoning. This is of paramount importance. Prominent focus must be placed on the inclusiveness of research proposals. In some instances, this is partially undermined.

*Lack of financial resources*

The provision of financial resources remains an essential constraint in fulfilling successful research study. Underfinancing academic institutions will negatively affect their capacity to recruit supervisors with far-reaching experience in the field of research. Likewise, thesis quality will automatically be lowered if co-supervisors are not well qualified. Another problem that overshadows the production of quality research comes to the fore when the research is funded by students themselves. Due to this restriction, the scope of their investigation may be tremendously reduced. In projects that require many respondents, limited budgets could also restrain the study because researchers may fail to meet their targeted number of potential participants. With regard to laboratory investigations, researchers might struggle to get a particular instrument to measure the samples. Outsourcing some responsibilities to institutions with similar instruments would be economical but not always possible.
Overlooking ethical issues
The steadiness of the entire research team serves as a firm foundation on which research findings are based. The nature of research mainly rotates around ethic matters that materialise during the entire research process. According to Saunders et al. (2003), access and ethics are key aspects in conducting effective research. Various ethical issues can surface in different phases, including the design, data collection, data capturing, and reporting phases. It is the responsibility of all the participants to dictate that ethical issues that may harm the integrity of the study are taken care of. This would certify the reliability of the overall findings as a true reflection of the study. Studies can also be highly jeopardised by conflicting interests among researchers and supervisors, which could lead to the manipulation of the investigation. Therefore, the sharing of communal research goals is the greatest asset to achieve anticipated outcomes. Teaching research ethics as a preliminary requirement to enter into research is crucial to annul any potentially harmful behaviour.

Critical Analysis
This article has objectively explored how credible academic research is undertaken. It is manifested that research studies occupy a prominent position in broadening critical knowledge in reaction to the economy’s strategic needs. Although efforts have been made to encourage advanced institutions to offer high-level research, many obstacles obstinately thwart this development. It is clear that a number of factors constrain the achievement of ground-breaking research findings.

This article emphasises that academic institutions and their research teams are the prime brains behind the dubious accomplishment of research studies. Some of these clusters however prevent durable research findings. This may be prompted by putting personal ambitions in the place of the research project. Lack of proper monitoring mechanisms to take people into account appears to discredit the academic profession. In certain instances, the absence of uniform standards to guide the compulsory requirements for higher degrees is rampant among education institutions. These discrepancies persist to expose substandard institutions.
Opposed to these are the well-equipped institutions who are eager to respond to international standards. What is needed is to help substandard institutions to improve on their academic deficits so that they comply and produce findings that are practically useful at national and international levels.

Frustration stemming from research originates in the lethargic preparation of research proposals. This is because many potential researchers ignore the importance of producing an unambiguous proposal to make their research attractive. In certain cases, research proposals are approved by research committees while these proposals lack academic impulse. Although this varies from one institution to another, there is an urgent need to ensure that there are no significant variances regarding the quality of research proposals.

Failure of students to be accredited with research methodology is considered the prime reason why proposals fail to meet academic requirements. Because some proposals are not evaluated objectively, loop holes can be identified at a later stage. Ultimately these loopholes befuddle the entire research programme. To a greater extent, this happens to universities that do not measure research proposals according to established standards. The lack of qualified professionals to run the affairs of research departments remains the greatest obstacle hampering the endorsement of attractive research proposals.

Despite the problems emerging from academic institutions and their respective staff, potential researchers are also identified as the prime reason for the downgrading of research. They normally lack courage to perform their studies with passion and determination so that their findings make meaningful contribution. In their view, obtaining a qualification is more important than the uniqueness of the overall findings to respond to the needs of diverse industries. This is the reason why so much academic research goes unnoticed – simply because the researchers lack the academic wisdom to dig deep in establishing treasured developments in key areas of expertise. These individuals like to show people their academic status, which includes the academic institutions where they studied. They do not realise that people are not interested in their pride-triggered revelations if they cannot implement
what they have learned. Perhaps this happens because many people are misinformed about the rationality behind obtaining certain degrees.

When business people complete their high-level research degrees, they wait for miracles to happen. These individuals usually fail to understand that they must identify the unique business opportunities leading to the invention of business ideas. They somewhat contemplate that their degrees will automatically warrant them business opportunities. When they attain these degrees but achieve little, they become unstable because they believe that they were misled in thinking the impossible. True entrepreneurs are born and not made. Therefore, undertaking academic learning only unlocks the potential that these entrepreneurs were born with. This is the position that some academia struggle to appreciate because of their ego's. In some cases, people do not think twice about fake qualifications as a way to access opportunities aligned to different qualifications. Fraud of this nature reveals the extent to which evil can seize the heart of a decent person.

The primary challenge among untried entrepreneurs is that they are misinformed to believe that academic institutions will develop them to the extent that they can become successful entrepreneurs. This misconception has plunged thousands of young and old people into registering for high-level research, thinking that the completion of those qualifications would make them powerful. This notion is highly disputed. A PhD will never provide you with unique business ideas if you lack the qualities of a true entrepreneur.

Although it greatly stimulates people to advance their learning in order to handle issues related to administrating their entities, ground-breaking opportunities emerge solely when such a person has the wisdom to identify gaps in the market, notwithstanding whether he or she has acquired a formal qualification. People must not be confused by those who claim that they can turn people into true entrepreneurs through academic learning. Learning is orientating a person to get familiar with developed standards and systems that will subsequently become the support needed to run a business efficiently. Traits found among successful entrepreneurs are somewhat more natural than manmade. This notion confuses millions of people
around the globe who think they can simply become successful innovators by acquiring certificates.

Obtaining qualifications that cannot be practically executed does not describe a person’s advanced intellectual capabilities. If people think they are the best, they must demonstrate it by implementing what they have learned. Many tertiary institutions portray themselves as masterminds to unlock the potential of true leaders. This hyperbole is intended to attract students without being realistic about the likelihood of contenders to succeed. Although people are encouraged to acquire formal degrees, the enrolment of master and doctoral degrees should be only allowed for those who have stronger academic credentials. Those who want to portray themselves as better than the rest by obtaining a doctorate must think carefully about their self-centred mind-set. These people want to represent themselves as superior than others. This stance is highly disputed because thousands of people have acquired those qualifications but remain disempowered and dysfunctional in advancing positively. Acquiring multiple qualifications does not necessarily mean a person is very intelligent. An individual can have ten or more PhDs but if he or she cannot implement these degrees they are worthless.

Our father Nelson Mandela stated that “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. This statement remains significant now and forever. The challenge is people who undertake high-level research studies without adding value to the development of humankind. If academic investigations lack credibility to contribute to the development of the world, positive criticism is necessary as a point of correction towards advancing excellent learning. Such criticism is necessary because education can indeed play a decisive role in the advancement of countries, especially those that remain deprived.

Conclusion and recommendations
The patronage that education conveys in advancing countries' economic development remains imperious. This obligates many countries to invest comprehensively in educational systems to attain goals associated to sustainable development. In developed countries, R&D plays a significant role to facilitate research initiatives. Research broadens knowledge in professions that remain
insignificant in boosting development. In doing so, research studies can strategically transform traditional ways of doing businesses as a way to achieve efficacy. In spite of this, there seems to be a big vacuum that still needs to be occupied to advance R&D. This has not been wholly achieved because of structural problems hampering the effective the implementation of high-grade research among developing nations.

Many obstacles are regarded as prime barriers to developing research in emerging countries. Unquestionably, research-based challenges originate from various angles. The following clusters play a central role in the fading of research standards. These, among other things, include external participants, academic institutions, supervisors, potential researchers and examiners. Promotion of personal interest among these groups impedes cutting-edge research findings. Academic institutions, that overlook the rational procedures of assessing research proposals while also relaxing the minimum requirements for admission can seriously harm the credibility of research. With regard to supervisors, there is a potential challenge in terms of their hesitance to allocate sufficient time to evaluate students’ completed work. With regard to researchers, lack of passion, together with impatience, disadvantages them to remain focussed and produce good quality products. Based on the broader findings presented, recommendations could be implemented in an attempt to reinstate the flagging state of affairs within the academic society. The following key recommendations are recommended:

*Establish national research review committee*

The attainment of insignificant academic research is frequently noticed among universities that are less capacitated. This leads to biased research findings. This reality requires the establishment of a national review committee to review all research projects by less capacitated institutions, especially with regard to doctoral studies. It is believed that this would improve the contribution of theses in helping countries to realise growth and development. Currently, significant gaps need to be filled so that tertiary institutions can promote research projects that meet national and international needs.
Assess academic institutions

Many tertiary institutions are sanctioned to offer research studies despite lacking the capacity for this. This frequently leads to the production of research findings that may not play meaningfully contribute to academic society. As such, the credibility of some studies becomes a point of scrutiny. This calls for an assessment of different institutions to establish whether they have enough capacity to offer a particular programme. Doing so will prevent the wasting of scarce resources to undertake research that does not contribute at all. Such research empowers a person to acquire a qualification but such a person will never make any contribution to the field of research.

Implement stricter review procedures for research proposals

A first step towards promoting credible research would be proper preparation of research proposals. Thorough investigation on existing literature provides a potential researcher with a great opportunity to articulate excellent proposals. The problem however emanates when lazy students duplicate studies that have already been done, thus creating a repetition of academic studies. The importance of good proposals demands that academic institutions become stricter in this area. In addition, it is highly recommended that research proposals that fail to meet academic reasoning be declined without compromise.

Implement stricter enrolment requirements for prospective students

Although advanced academic institutions are very strict regarding enrolment requirements, many institutions that continue to accommodate students with poor academic backgrounds. These institutions are somewhat impelled to do this so that they can reach their preferred number of students. This underlines that enrolment requirements for master and doctoral institutions should be set nationally to avoid the violation of entry requirements. This will also ensure that the standards of degrees produced in a country can be generalised. At the moment, there are serious discrepancies between research institutions.

Set research methodology training as precondition

Research methodology teaches students about the entire research process. Many people are accepted into the research field, although they have not been accredited
with research methods. Therefore, undermining research methods as part of enrolment requirements normally puts research into disarray. It is thus recommended that training in research methods be made compulsory when admitting students. Researchers with ample experience can be given special treatment in such cases.

Do not appoint researchers who lack academic passion
Many research students are absorbed into academic research for illogical motives. These groups are misled in thinking that if they acquire a particular degree they will find immediate promotion. Once they conclude their studies, they expect a miracle to happen and forget that the research degree alone cannot take them to their desired destination. It is argued that people should stop pursuing research activity while thinking this will turn them into trendsetters. Research should only be taken up by those with wisdom to exploit distinctive opportunities. The blame must be given to those who furnished these "potential researchers" with lies, which make them believe that they will become untouchable. This creates a situation where people without academic passion are registered for intensive research. They believe that the impossible will happen. They only enrol for their degrees because they were told to believe untested propositions. In the end, they usually produce a substandard thesis.

Set the regulation that doctoral degrees must be defended
Universities that persist to lower the standards of academic research normally overlook the importance of conducting a justification of theses. This is an important step because it provides researchers with the opportunity to meet their examiners. It also gives researchers the opportunity to clarify issues that examiners may not have been able to elaborate on convincingly during the assessment period. This defence also provides an opportunity for researchers to add more value to areas pinpointed by examiners. This then becomes a way to strengthen the overall findings of studies. Therefore it is argued that the defense of theses must be compulsory.

Implement tight monitoring of the data collection, capturing and analysis process
The integrity of research can be compromised during the data collection stage. Ethnical issues emerging during this stage can lead to the depletion of the overall reliability of the study. Some participants in the research can even attempt to
interfere with the collected data so as to make the findings more attractive. It is thus recommended that the data capturing and analysis process involve an objective and independent person. It is perceived that thousands of theses produced across the globe are distorted to also satisfy the needs of researchers or supervisors. In other words, supervisors are also becoming suspects of interfering with results in an attempt to provide a misleading picture about the true research findings. From the above it is clear that obtaining and handling the collected data remains a highly sensitive matter that needs careful attention.

**Promote research workshops**

Workshops are significant instruments to encourage the sharing of research knowledge among students. Newcomers can manage to learn and adjust to what is expected from them by learning from senior students. The challenges facing researchers can easily be shared and solved by participants. It is therefore highly recommended that research workshops form part of the attainment of high-level research degrees. Failure to establish such workshops would indicate that such academic institutions are not ready to produce the best graduates in the field of research. Attending workshops should be obligatory for doctoral students. Undermining this can be considered a serious violation of fulfilling the requirements of high level research.

**Evaluate academic journals**

Many journals that publish academic articles are distributed across the world. These academic journals differ considerably in terms of their publishing requirements. Some are very stringent about the quality of articles to be presented, while others are less concerned. This is the reason why some articles are not up to academic standard. Some of these journals undermine the quality factor because they are established primarily to attain financial rewards. It is important that academic institutions measure the journals that they use against the set standards of those journals.

**Discourage title-chasers into academic fraternity**

Although the promotion of R&D is imperative, this should be done for valid reasons. Today, many people who register for master and doctoral degrees do not have a
valid reason why they do so. In their minds they are enthralled with attaining status. Yet, in practical terms, they cannot even implement what they have learned. These individuals include supervisors who want to elevate their titles by undermining the integrity of the study. These clusters become trapped in a world of pride without substance. People must accept themselves and stop elevating their titles to portray a deceiving status about themselves. Typically, this culture is well founded among researchers who have been attracted into academic circles to change their titles. It seems that without these titles such researchers become very doubtful of themselves. As a result of such conduct, many people have been implicated for faking their qualifications.

Close undercapacitated research programmes
There is no need to encourage academic institutions that lack capacity to undertake research studies. This normally dilutes the good work already produced by advanced institutions. The need to cancel research programmes that are not represented by accredited scholars is imperative. This will create a culture where substandard works from these institutions would no longer be appreciated. This will turn away a large number of students who do not meet the enrolment requirements for research studies. Higher education departments must be adamant to dictate which programmes should be eliminated. The implementation of such a policy can be a turning point in restoring the dignity and respect associated with high-level research. Replacing quantity with quality theses must become the fundamental approach when tackling new research investigations.

Align research to national development strategies
Many concluded research projects still fail to meaningfully contribute to countries' developmental goals. Undertaking research projects that are not aligned to national vision downgrades the role of academic research. It is recommended that future research projects be guided by developmental strategies so that academic studies can be integrated into national developmental plans. It is expected that this would unlock the sustainable growth of developing and disadvantaged countries. Research that promotes the transfer of skills and technologies between countries is vitally important.
I wish to thank the Almighty God for all his Grace and Mercy upon me while I wrote this article

Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love

(2 John 1:3)

I am Who I Am
References


