

Editorial

What and why do we research it?

We welcome you to this Special Issue of the *Mawazo* Journal of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS), Makerere University. The Issue is indicative of CHUSS' commitment to align its processes with the University-wide move to a research-led institutional agenda. In its ten-year strategy (2020-2030), Makerere University seeks to evolve into a research-led University. It also strives to get more inclined toward graduate-level training. These two bold quests require bold investments in terms of reflective strategic planning and commitment if they are not to remain at the level of good intentions. The research-led pursuit demands a reflection on the question of what and why we need to investigate the issues we are concerned with ourselves. The answers to this question cannot be reached through brainstorming as an administrative routine or through workshopping as a formal legitimization of talking and

networking. The answers can only be arrived at through investigation specifically focused on unpacking what kind of civilisation and development we want to promote in our country, region, and world. Our research-led agenda, therefore, has to be rooted in context and common sense. Our context is multi-layered. On one hand, we have a national obligation to guide the course of our national civilisation. On the other hand, we need to align our processes with regional and international educational standards and trends. Without being intentional about such alignments, we risk becoming parochial.

Civilisation is a multi-stakeholder undertaking, and the university's division of labour lies in the fact that scholars at universities are the custodians of structured knowledge. National, regional, and international actors are ideally supposed to rely on universities to invent and innovate transformative approaches to development. Universities are, in essence, sites of transformation. They



are cradles of renaissances.¹ The scholars are civilisational agents, and Charles William Eliot, the President of Harvard College from 1869 to 1929, was of the view that the mark of astute leadership of a university should be the belief in higher education as the source of enlightenment and progress.² University administrators are therefore obliged to support scholars in pursuing their noble duty of knowledge production to further humanity's progress.

Knowledge production occurs within an ecosystem that facilitates the free trade in ideas. Wilhelm von Humboldt's counsel was that the modern university should be anchored on four pillars: free person, free research, free education and free knowledge.³ The second pillar reflects the imperative of knowledge production through scientific research/ structured inquiry across the entire scope of human knowledge as one of the cardinal missions of a modern university. It places upon scholars the duty to conduct research, publish articles and initiate collaborative scientific research agendas. Universities are thus primarily research institutions.

Research is therefore the seal of excellence for the university.

In that regard, the move to Makerere University's self-rediscovery as a research-led institution ought not be a matter of rebranding—this can be a marketing strategy, of course, but not of scholarly utility. What is transformative is the imperative of rethinking how best to anchor our processes upon the four pillars of a modern university, repeated for emphasis: free person, free research, free education and free knowledge. And because crafting and pursuing civilisational research agendas is a long-term commitment, with little to do with being taken up by the heat of the moment, universities have to pursue their objectives with composure and prudence, avoiding the temptation to yearn for attention. Lakatos, the philosopher of science and knowledge, cautioned against too much enthusiasm in the rapid expansion of universities and argued that too much struggle to impress and adjustment to what is externally fashionable (trending) is a mark of weak science and knowledge.⁴ Universities should announce what is groundbreaking, and they should not lose confidence in becoming breakers of simple news! In streamlining our research agenda, we should constantly reflect on what we are researching and its civilisational utility. And not

¹ Paphitis, S. A., & Kelland, L. (2016). The university as a site for transformation: Developing civic-minded graduates at South African institutions through an epistemic shift in institutional culture. *Education as Change*, 20(2), 184-203.

² Eliot, C. W. (1908). *University administration*. Houghton Mifflin.

³ Von Humboldt, W. F., & Von Humboldt, W. (1854). *The sphere and duties of government* (No. 22). London: J. Chapman.

⁴ Lakatos, I. (1970, January). History of science and its rational reconstructions. In *PSA: Proceedings of the biennial meeting of the philosophy of science association* (Vol. 1970, pp. 91-136). Cambridge University Press.

the least, we should periodically mull over the structural challenges that undermine our business of knowledge production.

Of all the structured challenges, the one we have direct control over is our lack of confidence in homegrown outlets of knowledge—our university-based journals and our University Press (Makerere University Press). The lack of confidence is subtly expressed in statements such as “let me send it to journal A, and if they do not accept it, at least I can ‘put’ it in B [university-based outlet] ...” Or plainly put: “I have no time for their rigorous editorial procedure, let me ‘put’ it in outlet B [university-based outlet], they won’t disturb me”. This can be dismissed as largely anecdotal evidence, but taken at the level of soul-searching, it reminds us that we need to empower and standardise our home-based outlets. The recent alignment of Makerere University Press, which includes the standardisation of the University-wide journals, is therefore a step in a sensible direction. We build on such achievements!

This Special Issue of the Mawazo Journal of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS) should, therefore, be received as an invitation to the national, regional and international researchers to consider the Mawazo Journal not as an alternative but rather the first destination of their cutting-edge research articles in the scholarly cultures of humanities and social

sciences. It is also an invitation to the Makerere University authorities to invest in our home-based outlets as part of the strategy for strengthening the university’s research agenda. The nine articles in this Issue attest to scholars’ renewed confidence in the Mawazo Journal, and to the CHUSS fraternity’s commitment to contributing to the civilisation of their country, region and world through research. The articles give a glimpse into CHUSS’ research agenda. They reflect the enduring spirit of scholarship in the disciplines of humanities and social sciences, despite the sometimes-overwhelming odds of being branded as useless by national authorities of importance and of being disenfranchised in terms of what scholars in the humanities earn from the national coffers.

And with all our odds, CHUSS is in a scholarly renaissance. We are pursuing our civilisational division of labour to ensure that the world remains aligned to the social, political, and economic aspirations of humanity. And regardless of their location, humanity seeks survival, a theme that permeates the discussion of the articles comprising this Special Issue. For that matter, Priscilla Asiimire’s article reminds us of the quest for the Africanisation of our educational processes. Her focus is on adult education as part of Makerere’s pedagogical mission. Emanuel Tumwerinde Atulinde reminds us of the role of women as the foundation of our existence

and the pillars of our security. The story of our existence, from birth to death, reflects the nurturing role of women. They nurture the young and take care of the sick. Emmanuel's article debunks the masculine narratives of struggles for freedom. Through the amplification of Maama Chama's story, Emmanuel's treatment celebrates the role of women in liberation struggles. In short, to Emmanuel, women epitomise our journey of survival and its struggles. Florence Ebila reminds us that survival should be disentangled from the dictates of normativity. Her discourse on the rebranding of the procurement of sex—prostitution that has translated into a somewhat “user-friendly” reference: sex work, projects the boundlessness of the visions of the frontiers of capitalism. Sex ceases to be pleasure but labour with all the pressures that are identified with survival as the primary quest of humanity. To survive is to labour—to toil. Toil is to work. It constitutes the use of energy. Prostitution is thus work because it aligns energy with survival. Humans, through prostitution, instrumentalise certain parts of their bodies for the entire self to survive. The gain of sex as labour allows oneself to get what to drink, clothing and use as shelter. So, the utility of sexual intercourse ceases to be about pleasure but is gauged on the lucrativeness of the returns.

Survival is thus beyond normativity; it is a functional necessity, not just for individuals but for collectives

such as nation states. Zaid Sekito's discussion of the politics of State Terrorism in Uganda indicates how, in an attempt to assert themselves in international politics, states resort to violence. In such cases, violence ceases to be absurd; it is a strategy. It revolutionises the way political, social and economic life is perceived by either the collective mind of society or the individual mind. Survival reconfigures the mindsets, and Lydna Nakalawa's article explains how socio-cultural orientations, which are alignments for the continued survival of communities, impact the mindsets of the youth. The need for alignment to survive complicates the dual quest for independence and survival by the youth. To survive is to adjust to the dictates of reality—the choices are limited and circumscribed by social, political and economic controls. Thus, the extent to which one's mind can roam through various options of survival is arrested by the social, political and economic reality. The mind is enslaved and fixed by context, and one wonders how the youth can extricate themselves from the prohibitive contexts to which they have been condemned if they are to become independent.

Survival is not independence; it is resignation to one's context, a truism that Eugenio Njoloma's article on the predicament of the people of Northern Malawi substantiates. Sorely put by the discriminatory practices of the government of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, they

accepted their predicament. They normalised abuse to survive. They avoided the experiences of the people of Biafra! One may argue that to resist is to survive; it makes sense, but not resisting cannot be construed as being stupid because survival is contextual, and the enjoyment of survival is locally circumscribed, and Gumoshabe's rather nostalgic documentation of the rich vocabulary associated with the local brew "Tonto" is indicative of the yearning to conserve and celebrate survival. Gumoshabe's quest is to educate us that survival is not always a struggle; it is also a sequential enjoyment. Tonto was served to reset the physical and mental state of people after a day's toil! Gumoshabe's lesson to us is that the past should be documented not only for the sake of celebrating it but also for transmission to the young through education. The idea is to impress it upon the young that to survive is to be innovative, for as Gumoshabe explains, Tonto is a marvel! To that extent, education is the systematic way through which survival is mobilised. The young

are introduced to the imperative of being innovative for communal and personal survival. This begs one question: What kind of education system have we organised for our young people?

William Muhumuza's interrogation of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and its inadequacies is a call for the streamlining the education system to empower the young to survive better in the future. Naomi Namanya's discussion of the ethical impropriety that punctuated the review of the Uganda Lower Secondary Curriculum Review Process summarises the shabbiness of our education system. We therefore ask: In our educational quests, are we helping our society to survive better? Are we equipping the youth with the skills that enable them to survive better? What and why are we researching? We wish you good reading!

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