

LEVERAGING RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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Abstract

The task of sustaining tertiary education is one that needs consideration from various facets. Acknowledging the necessity to impact the host communities of tertiary institutions is a fundamental principle of sustaining tertiary education in Nigeria. It is against this background that this paper examines how research and publications can serve as tools for universities to impact host communities as part of their public and community relations strategies. Social Responsibility and Developmental Media Theories served as the paper's theoretical frameworks. This theoretical paper shows that universities can strengthen ties with their host communities by dedicating research and publication projects which reflect the local environment. The paper concludes therefore, that Nigerian universities have a responsibility to re-address the collective goal of university education. One effective approach towards this goal is to prioritise research and publication efforts as means to cultivate strong relations with their host communities.

Keywords: Community Relations, Developmental Media Theory, Publications, Research, Social Responsibility Theory, Tertiary Education.

INTRODUCTION

The task of sustaining tertiary education is one that needs consideration from various angles and dimensions, including quality and relevance, curriculum development, and infrastructure and resources (Akubuilu & Okorie, 2013). While curriculum, understandably, garners primary attention due to its direct impact on degree programmes, it is equally crucial to consider other essential elements that contribute to enduring legacies within the environment of tertiary institutions. Bergan and Damian (2010) identify investing in modern infrastructure, supporting faculty development, promoting research and innovation, engaging with the community, and upholding rigorous quality assurance standards as other essential components for fostering enduring legacies within the tertiary education environment. Efforts made by tertiary institutions to keep the pace of growth and continued existence of the institutions could be enhanced when resources, both human and material, are harnessed in ways beyond the classroom setting (Amoo, 2014). The intention, however, should be to act as a buffer to the conventional streamlined curriculum design and actualisation. Such other efforts are to be considered with the understanding that impact, influence and effect are related phenomena that find expressions in diverse ways.

No doubt, those entrusted with the responsibility of managing tertiary institutions, especially within the Nigerian context, have continued to ensure that not only do they have the institutions maintain stable calendar while their tenures last but also, the institutions should exist and indeed be more stable, years after their tenures. This is the concept of sustainability. Since universities and colleges serve as key influencers in shaping societal values and behaviours, integrating sustainability principles into their operations, curriculum, and campus culture can foster environmentally responsible citizens and leaders (Angelaki et al., 2023).

This thesis posits that acknowledging the necessity to impact the host communities of tertiary institutions is a fundamental principle of sustaining tertiary education in Nigeria. Tertiary education, in this context, refers to “education given after the post basic education in institutions such as the universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics and other specialized institutions such as colleges of agriculture, schools of health technology and the National Teachers’ Institutes (NTI)” (Egwu et al., 2019, p. 49). The National Policy on Education by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) outlines the goals of tertiary education in Nigeria to include: contributions to national development through high level man power training; provision of accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; reduction of skill shortages through production of skilled man power relevant to the needs of the labour market; promote and encourage scholarship; entrepreneurship and community services (pp. 54-55). As highlighted by Egwu et al. (2019), the endeavour to achieve these goals within tertiary institutions underscores the significance of university teaching initiatives focused on fostering community engagement among students through project-based learning and action research initiatives.

Adewoye (2006) tasks African universities to be developmentally proactive, stressing that there is every need for them to be in the vanguard of nation-building. To do this, he states that African universities must of necessity look beyond the confines of stereotype western models of the functions universities should perform. Adewoye (2006) asserts that:

They must cease to be mere outposts of western mode of thought and way of doing things. They must move away from the traditions of western universities and draw inspiration from their environment. Each one must be a ‘developmental’ university, that is, a university that perceives itself, and seeks to play a role consciously, as the vanguard of the people of its environment to help themselves maximize the resources available to them to achieve a sustainable level of decent living, enhancing their capacity for innovativeness and self-renewal in the process (p. 19).

Although the use of research and publications as community relations strategy was not the focus of Adewoye’s proposition, we are however of the view that the truly developmental university as envisioned by Adewoye (2006) should strive to consider limitless ways of attaining success and that includes leveraging community relations. Every measure has to be applied for exploring ways of bringing about development and harmonious relationship between the universities and their various publics who look up to them for fulfillment. One of the measures that could be considered is redirecting some of the research and publication efforts

of the universities to impact the host communities as a public/community relations strategy.

Symbiosis between Research and Publications

There is a dynamic bond of affinity between research and publication; they so exist, one to the benefit of the other. The relationship between research and publication is symbiotic and integral to the advancement of knowledge and academic discourse (Bhagyamma, 2023). This interdependent relationship may explain why both activities are often placed within one context especially when creating departments and units among many institutions even outside the tertiary institutions. In practical terms, research can never be complete if it is not made available to the target audience through the published medium. In this way, publication becomes a very important vehicle through which research can be presented beyond the confines of the laboratory, the library and the private study of the researcher. Through publication, researchers contribute to the body of knowledge in their field, stimulate further research, and facilitate dialogue and collaboration among scholars (Johnston, Burleigh, & Wilson, 2020).

According to Sekaran (2000), research is “an organised, systematic, data-based, critical, scientific enquiry or investigation into a specific problem, undertaken with the objective of finding answers or solutions to it” (p. 1). Conducting research involves a structured and methodical approach to discovering answers to inquiries. Wimmer and Dominick (2003) put research simply as “an attempt to discover something” (p. 3). In light of this, research implies “a systematic process of providing satisfactory answers to puzzling questions or an investigative process of finding reliable solutions to problems through a planned and systematic selection, collection, analysis and interpretation of data relating to the problem” (Awoniyi et al., 2011, p. 3). The primary function of research is to explore answers to meaningful questions aimed at improving societal challenges (Igiri et al., 2021). Whether in its basic or applied form, the essence of research is to lead to a better understanding of the human environment with a view to making provisions for adaptations, improvements and harmony. As research benefits the subject of investigation by generating useful data, it may also lead to a revelation of otherwise unthought-of data in similar or related disciplines that are germane to human development

In light of the above, a robust publication activity needs to feed on the results and practical applications of research. While members of the academia engage in research and publications for career growth and upward mobility, as a means of attaining visibility among their peers as well as a means of garnering pecuniary benefits, there remains an essential purpose for which they could embark on research and publication efforts. They could engage in research and publications as a sure way of seeking the good of their host communities. That is, to build and cement bridges of relationships between institutions and their host communities. It is with this understanding that this paper highlights the tripartite agreement between research, publication and community relations and its ultimate role in sustaining tertiary education.

Apart from a few research institutes, the bulk of researches that are carried out in this country take place in the tertiary institutions. Every academic year, Appointments and Promotions Committees of various tertiary institutions sit to consider the elevations of their teaching staff.

One major criterion for the exercise is the output of such staff in both research and publications. The axiom, “publish or you perish” in the academic circle, captured the very essence of research productivity among academic staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions (Zainab et al., 2023, p. 2). This stresses the importance placed on scholarly endeavours within the academic community, with faculty expected to actively engage in research and produce publications to enhance their academic standing. Research activities within tertiary institutions extend beyond the faculty to include students. As part of their academic journey, students are required to undertake research projects with the potential for publication before being awarded academic degrees. This practice, according to Petrella and Jung (2008), not only instills critical thinking and research skills in students but also contributes to the overall research output of the institution. Tertiary institutions are, thus, the seats of research and publications, fostering a culture of intellectual inquiry and scholarly achievement. Therefore, they have the duty of positively impacting their host communities with their research and publication efforts. Host community in this context goes beyond the immediate community a tertiary institution is situated. It includes the adjoining communities that have many things in common with the immediate host community of tertiary institutions.

Publication, stemming from the Latin root “publicare,” denotes the act of making information accessible to the wider public. Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary translates it into English as “the act or process of publishing” or “published work”. This concept encompasses the dissemination of various forms of creative expression, including words and images (Galadima, 2013). Oso et al. (2008) consider publishing as a generic term used to describe the process of producing literacy and information materials for utility. Akpoko (2012) cited in Galadima (2023) says publishing “simply means to have a book or periodical printed out and distributed for sale” (p. 20). Akpoko highlights that publishing normally covers a wide range of activities, which include production of reports, books and other reading materials for the use of general public. In this light, publication serves as a vital outcome of the publishing process, facilitating the distribution of knowledge, ideas, and artistic endeavours. Recognising this intrinsic link between publication and dissemination, it becomes evident that research plays a pivotal role in this ecosystem. Research acts as the foundational source of content for publication, fuelling the creation of new knowledge and insights. Consequently, exploring the symbiotic relationship between research and publication unveils their potential to foster goodwill between universities and their host communities.

From Research and Publications to Community Relations

Understanding the synergy between research and publication underscores their collective impact on societal progress. Research endeavours generate novel findings and perspectives (Sekaran, 2000), which are then translated into publishable forms for wider consumption. By disseminating these discoveries through publication, universities contribute to the enrichment of public discourse and the advancement of knowledge. Moreover, this dissemination fosters stronger ties between academic institutions and their host communities by fostering an environment of transparency, collaboration, and mutual benefit (Harkavy, 2005). Through shared access to published works, universities can engage with local stakeholders, address

community needs, and cultivate goodwill.

Public relations, from which community relations evolved, emphasise a consciously planned and sustained effort to maintain a mutual relationship between an organisation and her publics (Bittner, 1989). These publics may be internal or external. There are numerous definitions of public relations, yet the one considered descriptive and practical is the definition provided by the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), as cited in Wilson and Jibrin (2014):

Public Relations is a management function of continuing and planned characters, through which the public and private organisations institutions seek to win and retain the understanding, sympathy and support of those with whom they are or may be concerned by evaluating public opinion about themselves in order to correlate, as far as possible, policies and procedures, to achieve by planned and widespread information, more productive cooperation and more efficient fulfillment of their common interest (p. 34).

This comprehensive definition highlights the strategic nature of public relations. It emphasises the importance of assessing public opinion and aligning organisational policies and procedures accordingly to foster cooperation and achieve common interests. The term “public” within the realm of public relations denotes a diverse array of individuals or organisations with direct or indirect connections to an entity (both internal and external publics) whose actions may influence its outcomes (Wilson & Jibrin, 2014). Various definitions of public relations, including the one mentioned above, acknowledge the crucial role of the public as an integral aspect of an organisation’s identity.

An essential part of the external publics of an organisation includes the community in which the organisation is situated, often referred to as the host community. Recognising the essential need of a harmonious co-existence between an organisation and her host community, public relations professionals maintain that there is a very strong need for community service to constitute a major form of community relations effort of every organisation. In a democratic setting, as observed by Gambo and Wilson (2010), there is a higher demand especially on public institutions to be more transparent, more accountable and friendly to one another and to the general public to succeed. In the long run, the gains include building, maintaining and sustaining good image, trust, goodwill, mutual understanding with the publics (Regester & Larkin, 2008).

According to Gambo and Wilson (2010), while there is some overlap in meaning, public relations and community relations are distinct concepts, with community relations being a subset of the broader field of public relations in practice. Community relations, as a sub-genre of public relations, seeks to maintain equilibrium of existence between an organisation and its host community. Littimore et al. (2004) define community relations as a facet of public relations, emphasising an institution’s deliberate and ongoing engagement with a community to sustain and improve its surroundings, fostering mutual benefits for both the institution and the community. In community relations, the establishment of a lasting relationship is not a one-time endeavour but a continuous process of nurturing and sustaining bonds. This can be

accomplished through an organisation's keen awareness of the needs of its host community (Ajala, 2001).

Central to effective community relations is an inclusive comprehension of community needs, necessitating thorough research, feedback collection, and attentive listening to community voices (Onwubuoya et al., 2023). This approach allows organisations to grasp the unique characteristics, challenges, and aspirations of the community. Organisations can then tailor communication strategies and initiatives to address specific concerns effectively. Moreover, open dialogue and active engagement serve as cornerstones of successful community relations by fostering transparent, two-way communication. By creating platforms for dialogue and actively involving community members, Onwubuoya et al. (2023, p. 85) assert that organisations facilitate the exchange of information, ideas, and perspectives, thereby nurturing a deeper understanding between themselves and the community. It follows therefore that in community relations, service and goodwill are pursued without necessarily reducing the organisation to charity. It implies a two-way relationship where both an organisation and her host community are aware of the needs and capabilities of each other.

Traditionally, Nigerian universities have over time formulated some known public/community relations methods whereby they make their host communities have a sense of belonging. Some universities do this by designating some percentage of contract awards to persons from their host communities. This is quite laudable in as much as such exercises are carried out transparently and within due process for all qualified persons within such communities. Some universities may choose to offer special admission placements to persons from their host communities under various terms that reflect the fact of special consideration as host communities. This is also laudable. Many a person who ordinarily could not have secured university admission considering the competitive nature of the admission is given some respite. There are still other universities that go beyond offer of admissions to offer of scholarship to persons from the host communities. Yet some universities make more liberal efforts in reaching every member of the host community by providing such communities with water supply, and in some cases supply of electricity. These laudable efforts are among some of the usual expectations from university host communities.

At this moment in our national experience when sustainable measures for our universities top the agenda of discussion, the very familiar and obvious measures need to be augmented with some novel ventures. This is the essence of advocating that universities should consider the inclusion of research and publications in their community relations strategies for host communities. Hence, the question arises: how can tertiary institutions leverage their research and publication endeavours to positively influence their host communities, while remaining mindful of the potential to bolster the pursuit of sustainable tertiary education within the nation? Both community relations and research and publications, being key concepts in this discourse, are essentially media activities and products.

Theoretical Framework

Without being unmindful of the objections of perhaps some anti-establishment scholars, we make bold to state that the university in relation to research and publications can adapt the tenets of social responsibility and developmental media theories for the general good of both the university and the host community.

Social Responsibility Theory

One of the fundamental objectives of the social responsibility theory is the rendering of service to the society (Folarin, 2002). The theory substitutes media industry and public responsibility for total media freedom on one hand and for external control on the other (Baran & Davis, 2012). McQuail (2005) describes the dominant assumptions of the theory as follows:

The media have obligations to society, and media ownership is a public trust; news media should be truthful, accurate, fair and objective and relevant; the media should be free but self-regulated; the media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct and under some circumstances, government may need to intervene to safeguard the public interest (p. 150).

Similarly, universities, as educational and research institutions, have an inherent responsibility to their host communities. Research and publications from these universities should reflect the same principles of truthfulness, accuracy, fairness, and relevance. By adopting a strategy that emphasises research and publications, universities can operate in alignment with these principles, utilising them as effective tools to engage with and positively impact their host communities. The mandate placed upon the media, or in this case, universities through their research and publications, according to the social responsibility theory, is to furnish fair, balanced, and objective information on different sides of an issue, thereby enabling audiences to formulate their own judgements and enhancing the truthfulness of reporting (Obagwu & Idris, 2019).

Drawing parallels from the realm of media and its social responsibility, Melisanda (2009) delineates the multifaceted accountability of the press to its audiences, government, owners, and its own professional integrity. In the context of tertiary institutions and their engagement with host communities, research and publications can be perceived as “academic media” with a distinct social responsibility. Melisanda (2009) argues that social responsibility of the media entails that:

The mass media are expected to inform the citizenry of what goes on in the government, which in a way, keeps rules in check. Also, the media should be reporting on and prompting discussion of ideas, opinions and truths towards the end of social refinement; acting as a nation’s bulletin board for information and mirroring the society and its people just the way they care, thus exposing the heroes and the villains (p. 6).

Just as the media is expected to inform and reflect the society it serves, universities, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, should view their research and publications as tools to

inform, engage, and uplift their host communities. By prioritising research and publication endeavours, universities can:

- i. Inform and educate their audiences by providing accurate and relevant knowledge that addresses the needs and challenges of the community.
- ii. Offer constructive insights and recommendations that can influence policies and foster positive change through evidence-based research.
- iii. Utilise their academic resources and expertise to address societal issues, promote local development, and offer solutions to pressing challenges.
- iv. Uphold professional integrity and excellence by ensuring the quality, relevance, and ethical standards of their research and publications, thus maintaining their credibility and enhancing their reputation as centres of knowledge and innovation.

The failure of tertiary institutions to fulfill any of these responsibilities significantly undermines their accountability to their host communities, and consequently leads to distorted social responsibility (Obagwu & Idris, 2019, p. 28). The application of social responsibility theory, therefore, provides a holistic and actionable approach for universities to fulfill their broader societal responsibilities effectively. By prioritising research and publication endeavours and aligning them with the genuine needs and aspirations of their host communities, universities can play a pivotal role in fostering positive social change, enhancing community welfare, and reinforcing their position as invaluable contributors to the betterment of the society.

Developmental Media Theory

The developmental media theory, one of the normative theories of the press, serves a working framework used to elucidate how the mass media reflects the socio-economic conditions in which it operates (Dalhatu, 2014). This theory is anchored in goal-oriented values aimed at fostering growth and development within the society (Baran & Davis, 2009). According to McQuail (1983), the central thesis of the theory emphasises that in developing nations, the mass media should prioritise “the primacy of the national development task (economic, social, cultural, and political); the pursuit of cultural and informational autonomy; support for democracy; and solidarity with other developing countries” (p. 131).

In applying this theory to the operations of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, it suggests that universities, through their research and publications, should give precedence to the developmental needs of their host communities. By focusing on research areas that align with the socio-economic, cultural, and political challenges and opportunities of their communities, universities can actively contribute to local development. Moreover, when this research is shared through publications, universities are disseminating valuable knowledge, promoting cultural and informational autonomy, and supporting democratic processes within their communities. This proactive engagement can serve as a strategic approach for tertiary institutions to cultivate strong, meaningful, and mutually beneficial relationships with their host communities. Citing McQuail (1981), Kadijat (2009) clearly elucidates that:

Development Media Theory advocates media support for an existing political regime and its efforts to bring about national economic development. By supporting government development efforts, media aids society at large. This theory argues that until a nation is well established and its economic development well underway, media must be supportive rather than critical of government. Journalists must not pick apart government efforts to promote development but, rather, assist government in implementing such policies (p. 128).

Drawing from the insights of McQuail (1981) as cited in Kadijat (2009), it becomes evident that the development media theory emphasises the role of media in supporting an existing political regime and its endeavours towards national economic development. In the same vein, universities must leverage their research and publications to support government efforts towards national development. When research and publications are prioritised and directed towards addressing the needs and challenges of their host communities, universities can play an instrumental role in fostering community development, strengthening relationships, and contributing to societal advancement. This proactive and supportive approach by universities resonates with the principles of development media theory, which advocates a collaborative and constructive engagement with the community to promote mutual growth and development.

While social responsibility theory focuses on the responsibilities of media organisations to society as a whole, developmental media theory takes a broader perspective, considering the role of media in promoting social and economic development at both individual and societal levels (Dalhatu, 2014). McQuail (1987) points out two critical components of the role of the media, which resonate with the tenets of both the developmental media theory and the social responsibility media theory. These include: firstly, “media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy” and secondly, “media should give priority in their content to the national cultures and language(s)” (cited in Ude-Akpeh & Ukwella, 2017, p. 10). These theories are not abstract concepts but rather pragmatic frameworks aimed at addressing real issues and producing tangible outcomes within communities. The theories underscore the importance of aligning academic endeavours with local needs and cultural contexts. Moreover, while both research and publication are media procedures, publication doubles as a media product. To this end, we consider our chosen theoretical framework adequate to drive our advocacy that universities should prioritise research and publications as instruments for building community relations within their host communities. By conducting research that addresses community concerns and ensuring its accessibility to the public, universities can actively engage with and contribute to the development of their host communities, thus embodying the principles of both developmental media and social responsibility theories.

Investing in Research and Publications for Community Relations

The university in contemporary times ranks highest among the pinnacle of learning and acquisition of knowledge. The worth of any university can be determined by the standard of her products and productions. This includes quality of graduates and teacher, quality of teaching; quality of researches and publications; and quality of social services rendered. This

is the crux of community relations. As rightly observed by Wilson and Jibrin (2014), “effective community relations depend on recognising the interdependence of institutions with their communities” (p. 35). An organisation’s success needs to be measured by the effectiveness of her outreach to the host community which is a microcosm of the entire publics of the organisation. Because of the physical proximity of an organisation and her host community, the goodwill and the rating of the organisation by the host community will go a long way in determining the totality of the organisation’s perception by the other publics.

Community relations efforts tend to fulfill the Biblical injunction: “cast your bread upon the waters; for thou shall find it after many days” (Ecclesiastes 11:1 KJV). Like its parent body (public relations), the concept of community relations is a management function (Dominick, 1994). Management often maps out strategies that help an organisation to identify the needs of her publics. These needs vary from public to public. In the relationship between every university and her host community (which is one of her publics), there are a number of areas of need that could be addressed using the principles of community relations. One of such areas is research and publications.

Universities give impetus to research and publications by instituting a body at the level of academic departments, faculties or even at the level of the senate. In some universities, this body is called “Senate Publications Committee”, which oversees and facilitates scholarly output across various academic disciplines. These bodies serve as engines for promoting academic inquiry, innovation, and dissemination of knowledge. By channeling resources and support towards research endeavours, universities demonstrate their commitment to advancing scholarly pursuits and intellectual engagement within their academic communities (Trappett, 2023). Leveraging the works and findings generated by these committees presents a compelling opportunity for universities to enhance their community relations strategies.

At the faculty and departmental levels, similar bodies such as “Faculty Publications Committees” and “Department Publications Committees” further amplify the impact of research and publications within specific academic domains. These committees serve as conduits for coordinating and promoting scholarly activities tailored to the unique contexts and interests of individual faculties and departments. By tapping into the diverse expertise and interests represented within these committees, universities can tailor their community relations strategies to align closely with the needs and priorities of their host communities. Through targeted outreach initiatives and collaborations, universities can effectively leverage research and publications as instruments for building stronger and more meaningful connections with their local communities (Leal et al., 2023), thereby fostering a symbiotic relationship that benefits both academia and society at large.

A very pertinent consideration that universities desiring to set the pace in the use of research and publications as an element of their community relations efforts is the determination of areas of need (Ajala, 2001; Onwubuoya et al., 2023). It is not a project that will be converted to charity. It is also not a project that should be embarked upon without reasonable input from the various research groups and committees within a given institution. The beauty of this exercise is that it lends itself to interdisciplinary collaboration within the university setting. Virtually

every discipline within the programmes of study in a given university will find areas of participation in such a project.

One fact which Nigerian universities are grappling with is the need for the translation of theories into practical goals. This has given rise to the initiation of what is termed the convergence of town and gown. Some universities approach this initiative through regular meetings at determined frequencies with their host communities. Others realise it through extending invitations to industrialists and political as well as social activists, including various categories of entrepreneurs and other professionals to present lectures sharing their practical experiences. In the humanities, especially in the literary and creative arts, some universities offer placements to some established writers in the capacity of “writer-in-residence” (Armitage, 2003). The essence is to bring into the academics the hands-on-application element that will nurture writing and literary creativity amongst the lecturers and their students as well as within the other members of the university community who have the potentials and aptitude. In the sciences, various experiments with practical applications are often facilitated even with funds from notable donor agencies on such projects that are aimed at bridging the gap between the town and the gown. Utilising research and publications as a community relations strategy is another deliberate effort of bridging the gap between the town and the gown.

Without host communities, the history and indeed geographical space of universities would be incomplete. The universities do not exist in a vacuum; they do exist and operate from identifiable geographical settings. By allocating some of their research and publications projects to reflect the environment of their existence, the universities will be giving an eloquent testimony of the fact that reciprocation of the accommodating gestures of the host communities is a natural desideratum. How to make this possible is by consciously allocating fund and funding as part of the annual budget of the universities to researches that bother on aspects of the host communities. When cultural, economic, and social aspects of host communities become focal points of research and publication, it fosters a natural bond between universities and their host communities. Additionally, it elevates universities’ profiles among international organisations and communities, portraying them as socially responsible institutions.

The universities can attain major scientific breakthroughs in the pharmaceutical, biological, agricultural and allied sciences by focusing their research and publication efforts on their host communities. Emphasis in this regard could be on the flora and fauna of such host communities. There are so many contributions that such projects could engender. It affords the university academics and researchers the opportunity of understanding the wealth of resources within their host communities, which when exploited can bring about tremendous positive results. Because such efforts can only be achieved through a synergy between the university researchers and academics on the one hand and resource persons drawn from the host communities on the other, a very fundamental gap-bridging initiative is being instituted without much effort. It is only a natural outcome. By deciding to publish researches, attention is drawn from the global community to the contributions that otherwise neglected communities and peoples can make to humanity.

CONCLUSION

In integrating the principles of community relations with the research and publications emanating from tertiary institutions, the administrations of Nigerian universities must not merely be passive participants but should proactively plan, execute, and sustain these initiatives. Such an endeavour demands a clear vision and commitment. By engaging in this endeavour, Nigerian universities would be fulfilling a primary role for which they were established, which is to “influence our society by identifying themselves with it and endeavouring to improve the community in which they live” (Azikiwe, 1977, p. 607). As a university, the pragmatic translation of the above goals is a realisation of the fact that “there is a duty we owe to human society as such, to the state to which we belong, to the sphere in which we move, to the individuals towards whom we are variously related, and whom we successfully encounter in life” (Newman, 1980, p. 915).

Building upon Newman’s assertions, we concur with his perspective on the functional *raison d’être* of a university. Newman (1980) eloquently states:

...a university is not the birthplace of poets or of immortal authors, of founders of schools, leaders of colonies, or conquerors of nations... But a university training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, of supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age..., and refining the intercourse of private life (p. 916).

Newman’s view underscores the expansive role of universities in the society, extending beyond academic and intellectual pursuits to shape the broader cultural, social, and ethical landscape. The timeless adage, ‘charity begins at home’, remains profoundly relevant when considering the symbiotic relationship between universities and their host communities. Nigerian universities have a responsibility to realign with the overarching goals of university education as delineated by Newman (1980). A powerful and effective strategy to achieve this objective is to prioritise research and publication efforts. By doing so, universities can harness these tools as potent avenues to cultivate and nurture strong, meaningful, and mutually beneficial relationships with their host communities, therefore exemplifying the true spirit and purpose of tertiary education.

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