Chapter 11

Institutional Repositories as Impetus for Curbing Plagiarism in Nigerian Universities

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is an exposition on the Institutional Repositories as impetus to curbing plagiarism in Nigerian universities. The chapter analyses the nature of academic plagiarism and its prevalence in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria especially among students and faculty members. The chapter also proffers strategies which universities can employ to minimise and or eventually curb plagiarism.

INTRODUCTION

General principle underlying ethical writing is the notion that the written work of an author, be it a manuscript for a magazine or scientific journal, a research paper submitted for a course, or a grant proposal submitted to a funding agency, represents an implicit contract between the author of that work and his/her readers (Roig, 2015). Accordingly, the reader assumes that the author is the sole originator of the written work and that any material, graphics, diagrams, text, data, or ideas borrowed from others is clearly identified as such by established scholarly conventions, such as footnotes, block-indented text, and quotations marks (Unplag.com n.d.). Readers of the work also assume that all information conveyed therein is accurately represented to the best of the author’s abilities. “Ethical writing is clear, accurate, fair, and honest” (Moten, 2014). It’s an honourable cause that if promoted will convey to readers a commitment to ethical practice in other aspects of the author’s work. As is the case with most other human activities, inadvertent errors may occur in the process of writing that end up violating the rules of ethical writing. Other similar errors may include situations whereby an author or authors claim to be completely the original owners of an idea which they are not. The idea may have actually been articulated by someone, somewhere, earlier. Other unintentional errors that are very common and frequently occur is when an author borrows heavily from a source and, in careless oversight, fail to fully credit the source. Abdullah, Azni, Muhammed, Krishan (2012).

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However, there is a serious aspect of plagiarism practiced in most of our institutions all over Nigeria in recent years as a result of the diverse and very simple forms of information transfer via information networks and technology. Yet such lapses, even if unintentional, Roig (2015), clearly explained that can have significant negative consequences if not corrected. Intentional lapses in research integrity represent the most serious threat to the academia and academic research. Ataie- Ashantiani (2016) concludes that, such misconduct runs contrary to the principal goal of ethical writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutional Repositories provide an immediate and futuristic valuable complement to the existing scholarly publishing model, Batane, (2010) and at the same time stimulate innovation in a new disaggregated publishing structure. The immediate benefit of the Institutional Repository Anbu, (n.d.) explained that all the research outputs which are collected and stored in its repository are unconditionally made available to its faculty and to all other members who are associated with it. This notwithstanding, as academic institutions and producers of primary research, it is saddled on it, the responsibility of capturing and preserving the intellectual output of their faculty, students, staff and other researchers in the university community.

Hence, Institutional Repositories may be defined as a type of digital library established by an institution, populated by the staff, researchers, students and other members of the institution and to be consulted by both members of the university and the outside world. Ogbomo and Muokebe, (2015).

An institutional repository is also seen as an online archive for collecting, preserving and disseminating digital copies of the intellectual outputs of an institution. This is particular with research institutions. The reason for the development of an institutional repository is to redefine the production and dissemination of intellectual property/materials of an academic community. Bailey, (2008).

An institutional repository is further referred to as “a university-based institutional repository is a set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members”. Lynch, (2003) It is most essentially an organizational commitment to the stewardship of these digital materials, including long-term preservation where appropriate, as well as organization, access or distribution. The aim of IR, Ogbomo and Muokebe, (2015) averred, is to increase visibility, preservation and storage of all types of institutional output, including unpublished literature, support for learning and teaching, standardization of institutional records, ability to keep track of and analyze research performance, breaking down of publishers’ cost and permission barriers, help universities to share their knowledge and expertise.

Additionally, an institutional repository is established for the use of academic institution, research organizations government department and agencies, but permit me to state here that there are variations in institutional repositories. Some are meant to serve specific groups of people like departments or faculties. For example, some universities have teaching/learning repositories for educational materials. In most cases they are established to provide open Access to the institutions research output. This can as well be known as departmental or faculty repository as the case may be, some are meant to serve particular types of materials like dissertations and theses.

An institutional repository might also include other digital assets generated by academics, such as data bases, administrative documents, published articles of members of the institution, course notes, learning objects, or conference proceedings. Yuan, Banach and Meghan (2011). Deposit of material in