Shaping Quality Assessment and Open Science Practices in African Research

By

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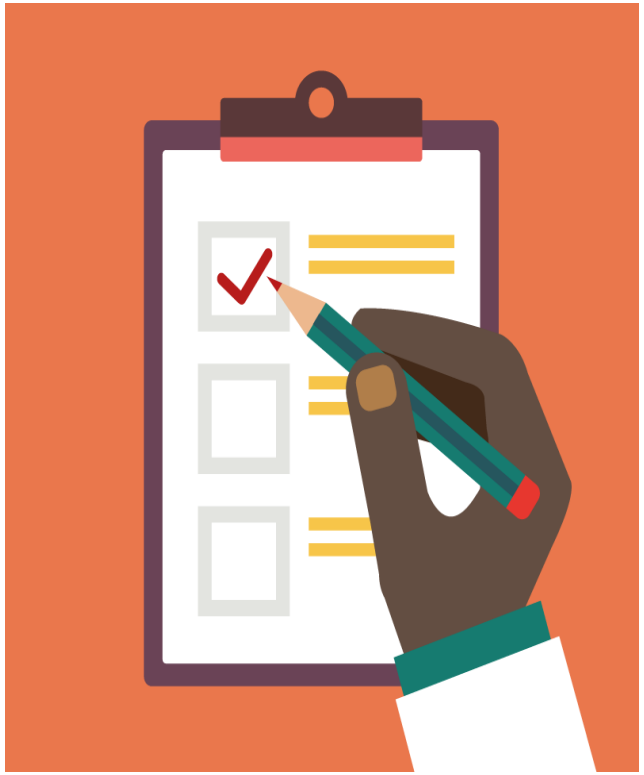
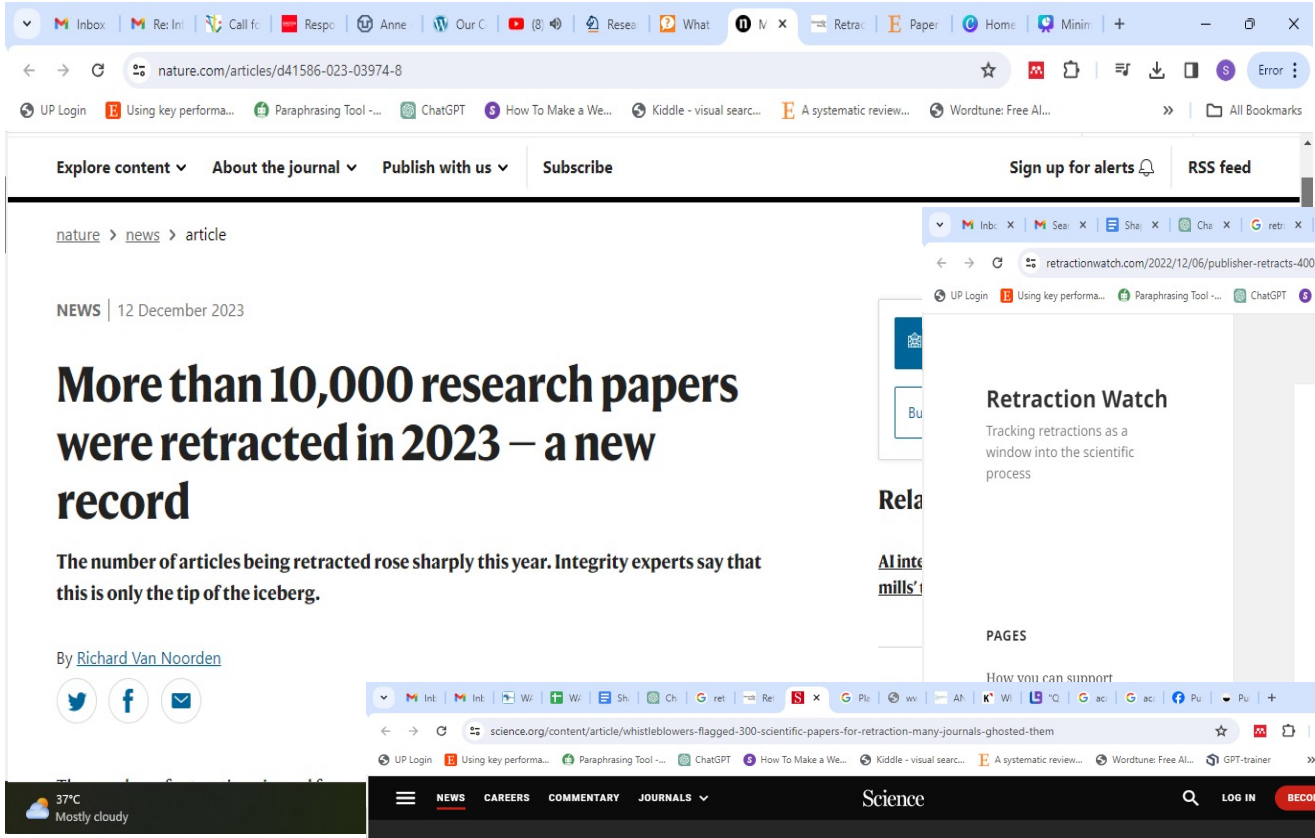
Presentation Outline

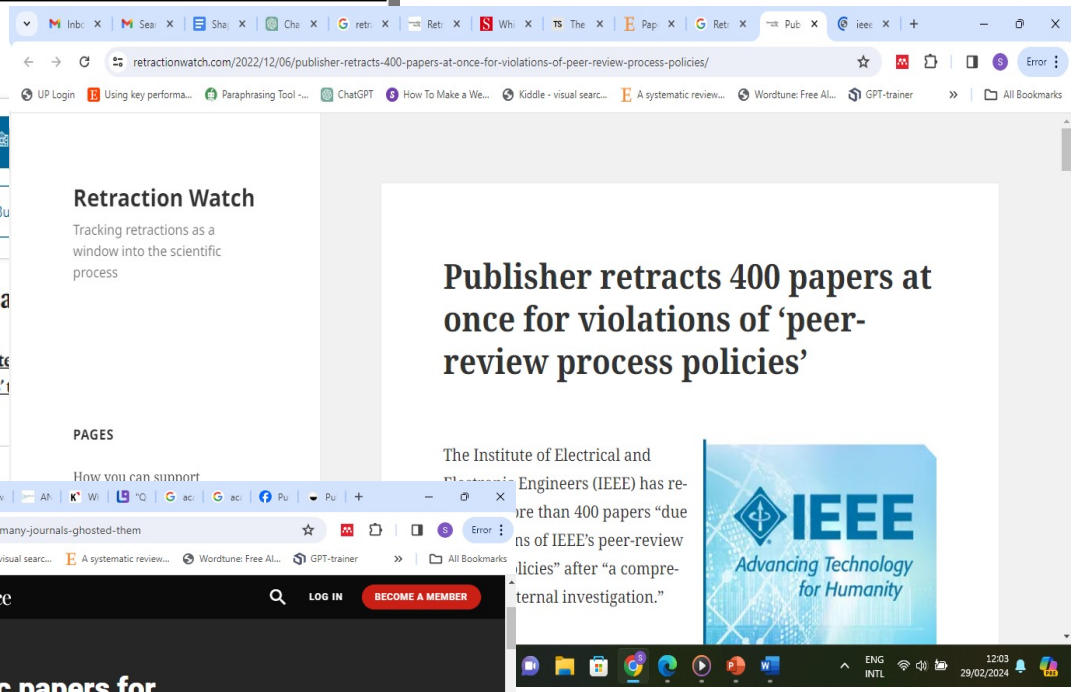


- News from the Academic Research Community
- Underlying issue with the research community
- Challenges of existing research assessment methods
- Some assessment initiatives across the world
- Reasons for African universities to rethink the existing ranking system
- What needs to Change
- Call to action

News from the Academic Research Community

- Compromised Peer Review Process
- Systematic manipulation of publications





Culled from nature.com; ieee.org

What is the underlying issue with the research community?

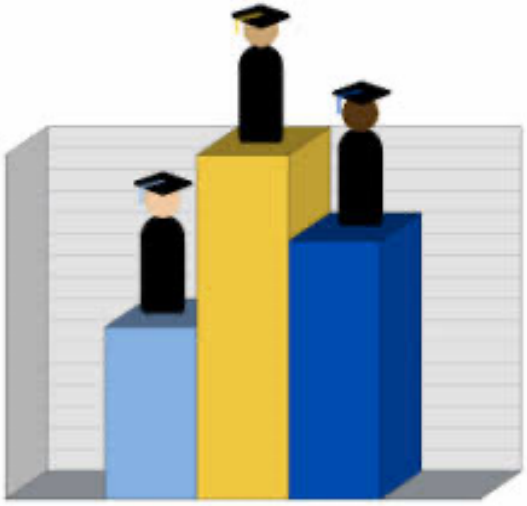
Focus on Metrics and Analytics for Research Assessment

WEB OF SCIENCE

THOMSON REUTERS

Scopus®

Challenges of existing research assessment methods



- Metrics like number of publications, citation counts and journal impact factors often overshadow qualitative aspects.
- Publish or perish culture: Pressure to meet metrics and high number of publications leads to unethical practices like citation manipulation or ***salami slicing***.
- Incentivising and preference for publishing in ranked journals from commercial publishers.

Habitually, these processes and culture are from the global north (developed countries) and the African research community aligned with them for promotion, hiring and tenure.

Paradoxically, the global north has realised these issues and started working on new evaluation systems as far back as 2012.

Some New Assessment Initiatives Across the World

Developed countries

San Francisco DORA
Declaration on Research Assessment

A global database of responsible research assessment

Plan S
Making full & immediate Open Access a reality

- The underlying principle of these evaluation initiatives is to ***evaluate research based on its intrinsic qualities and merits rather than relying on proxy measures such as the journal of publication or the journal impact factor***.

CoARA
Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment

Some New Assessment Initiatives Across the World

Developed Countries

Netherlands

- The recognition and rewards reform programme focuses on the content of what researchers themselves see as their best achievements and skills, like teaching and collaboration.

Spain

- Government assessments will no longer consider only the impact factor of the journals but also details such as whether the research reaches non-academic audiences through news reports or government documents.

- Assessors will consider papers published on non-commercial, open-access publishing platforms that don't charge author fees.

Some New Assessment Initiatives Across the World

Utrecht University

Leiden Manifesto (LM)

The government of China research assessment reforms seeks to replace a focus on Web of Science-based indicators, balance internationalisation with domestic needs, and replace its traditional quantitative evaluation methods with qualitative peer review.

Will no longer actively participate in rankings as these do not adhere to the principles of open science.

10 principles to guide research evaluation Diana Hicks and Paul Wouters from Georgia Institute of Technology and Leiden University

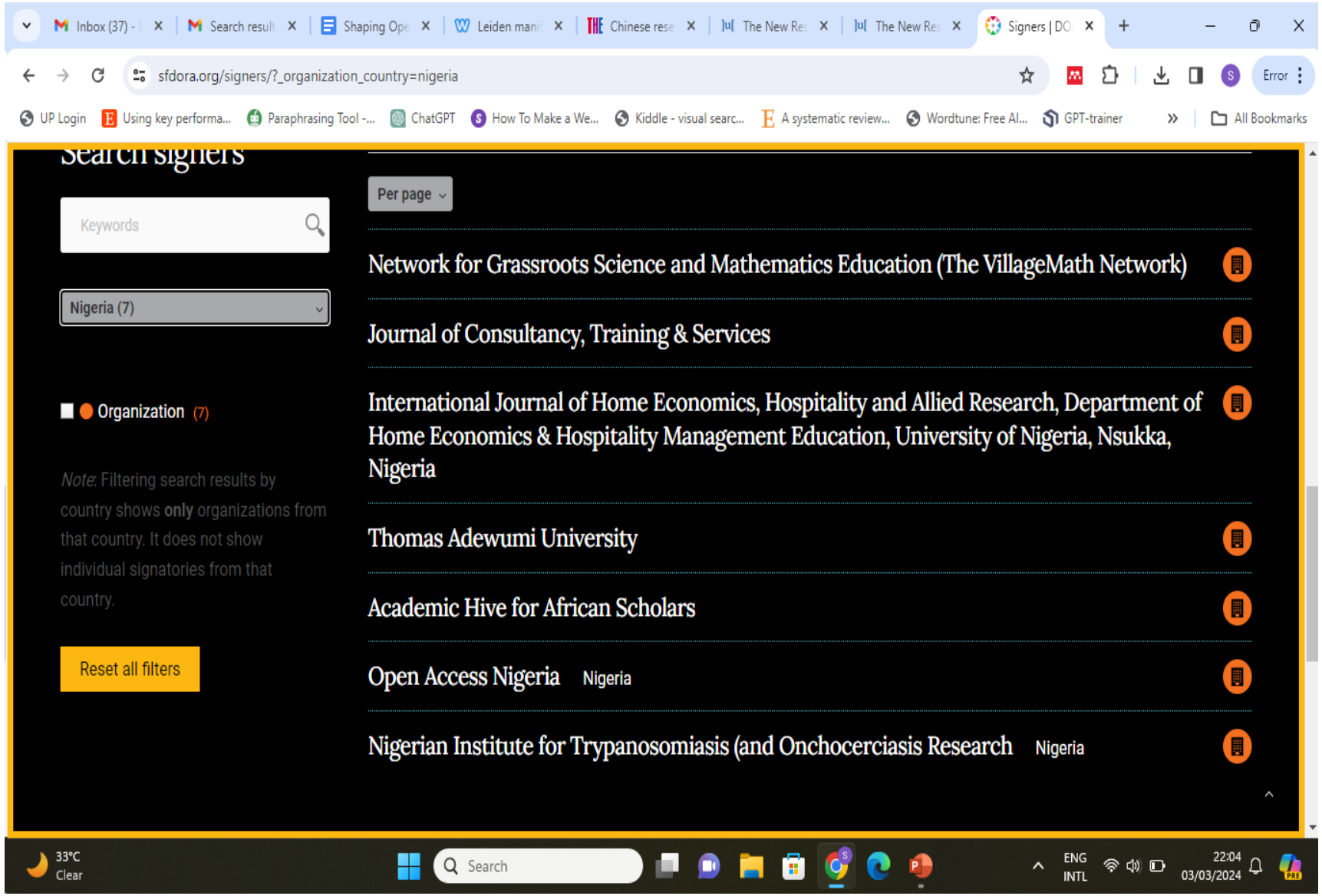
Some New Assessment Initiatives Across the World

Developing Countries

The Latin American Forum on Research Assessment (FOLEC-CLACSO) has taken the lead in formulating policies and practices for research assessment processes in their region.

Some New Assessment Initiatives Across the World

Seven organisations are signatories of Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) in Nigeria



Some New Assessment Initiatives Across the World

Some New Assessment Initiatives Across the World

These assessment initiatives lean heavily on the opinions of the research community of the developed countries and largely ignore specific needs and conditions that exist in Africa.

No coordinating body, association or organisation in Nigeria!

Reasons for African universities to rethink the existing ranking system

- Ranking system is at the root of global inequality and academic colonialism.
- Research is directed towards subjects that are more important for northern countries and less relevant for African local societies.
- Ranking serves the "Knowledge Economy", where research is judged by economic standards (profits), competition, and exclusiveness. Yet African researchers with limited research funds and grants are burdened with pay-to-publish and closed-access publishing models to meet promotion or hiring criteria, competing with the standards of the global north.
- It makes a lot more sense for African countries to forge their standards for publishing and evaluating research based on the principles of open science, cooperation, sharing, and societal relevance.

What needs to change

- Research assessment system:

  Evaluation system based on societal impact, solving local problems and collaboration with non-academic audiences NOT on journal impact factors.

  Incentivise ***open science practices and roles***, for instance, mandate the uploads of other research outputs (preprints, post-prints, research data, open peer review reports, open education resources) as part of assessment reforms.

- Policy: Open access publishing be made default by the government; this should be included as a criterion for all publicly funded research.

- Capacity: The capacity of libraries, librarians, and Academic Publishing Centres (APCs) be built to provide open access publishing and indexing support services in their institutions, leveraging open infrastructure platforms for books, journals, and articles.

What needs to change

- Infrastructure: National open scholarly publishing infrastructure to provide better community-driven governance and infrastructure for coherence and sustainability.
- Transitioning to non-commercial indexing services.
- Promotion of publishing and research on indigenous knowledge.

It is time to rethink and actively contribute to the advancement of new quality assessment policies that:

- Recognise open science practices
- Peculiar to our context and
- Shape the future of research assessment development in Nigeria.

LIBSENSE is calling on the CVCNU, AULNU, heads of research directorates, and other higher education regulators in the higher education sector in Nigeria to join in advancing new quality assessment policies that take cognisance of open science practices.

Thank you