

The Learning Academic –Selected African Autobiographies
Fred Awaah, University of Professional Studies, Ghana, Juma Shabani, University of Burundi, Burundi, and Peter Okebukola, Lagos State University, Nigeria

Abstract

Continual learning in any career guarantees a better understanding of the career, thus enhancing an individual's efficiency and effectiveness. This appears to be the motive behind lifelong learning and subsequently the "Learning academic", which has become a recurrent phenomenon in the African higher education space (AHES). Academics are encouraged to embrace continual learning as they perform their mandate of teaching, research, and community service. It is argued that this holds the future for academics who want to set themselves apart as exceptional learners and teachers. This desk review with complimentary interviews unveils the features and status of learning academics in Africa to launch the pointers that would establish one as a learning academic. Anchored on Maslow's Theory of Needs suggests that learning academics want to know more, want to be exceptional, make efforts to have resources to embark on their quest for knowledge, work with other generations of academics, and can endure academic pressure.

Keywords: Learning Academic, Higher Education, Africa, Theory of Needs

Introduction

Learning can no longer be dichotomised into a place and time to acquire knowledge (School) and a place and time to apply knowledge (the workplace). Today's citizens are flooded with more information than they can handle, and tomorrow's workers need to know far more than anyone can retain (Fischer, 2000). Although the work of Fischer (2000) seems old, it's as relevant today as it was in yesteryears. Life-long learning is the key to developing every human resource, especially those in academia who are entrusted with learning to teach. To be a learning academic, one has to embrace lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning is the lifelong, voluntary, self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for personal and professional reasons. It enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and individual development and increases competitiveness and employability. The importance of Lifelong Learning has been rising for some important reasons. These are increasing life expectancy, the "old-age dependency" ratio, and the desire to improve life quality and keep themselves in good physical and mental condition by humans (Ates & Alsal, 2012).

Academics in the past were considered repositories of knowledge. This notion made academics synonymous with knowledge and wisdom. Over time, and with the upsurge of the internet and varied sources of information, academics have lost this "imaginary" credential of being the only citadel of knowledge. In response, many academics have taken to lifelong learning to keep updated

on the new knowledge relative to their and other areas of study. This new trend seems to spark a new term in higher education circles – the learning academic. In its simplest sense, a learning academic is one who, under diverse motivations, keeps learning to achieve the drive for learning. They understand that knowledge is not stagnant; thus, being knowledgeable entails continual learning.

For this study, further attempts have been made to define who a learning academic is. A learning academic is an academic who is always looking for improvement at all levels. He/she is a lifelong learner and learns from different sources (Hortense Atta Diallo, University Nangui Abrogoua, Coe Di'voire).

An academic who passionately and continually seeks knowledge (Margaret Ngugi, Alupe University College, Kenya).

A learning academic is someone whose career focus is on continually contributing to knowledge and extending frontiers of research in their field of study. They also recognise the importance of raising protege to continue their legacy as early as possible in their career (Adeola Michael Dahunsi, University of Abomey-Calavi-Benin Republic)

Rationale / Justification

The idea of learning academics is gradually creeping into the African higher education space. While many seem to accept this as an idea that will enhance Africa's teaching and learning milieu, there appears to be scant research on the concept; especially within the African higher education space. Largely, literature on lifelong learning is prevalent, which considerably differs from the learning academic. This study attempts to fill in the gap by identifying ideas that can collectively be placed into the learning academic "basket".

Theories underpinning the idea of learning academics

Although many theories are appropriate to our study, Maslow's theory of needs and the Efficient Lifelong Learning Algorithm has been adopted.

Maslow's motivational theory comprises a five-tier prototypical of human needs, depicted in hierarchical levels. Abraham Maslow argues that needs that are lower in the hierarchy must be satisfied before thinking of higher-level needs. He presents his theory from the lower levels of the hierarchy upwards as physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation (see Figure 1). His theory implies that higher hierarchy needs emerge when individuals satisfy the previous need.

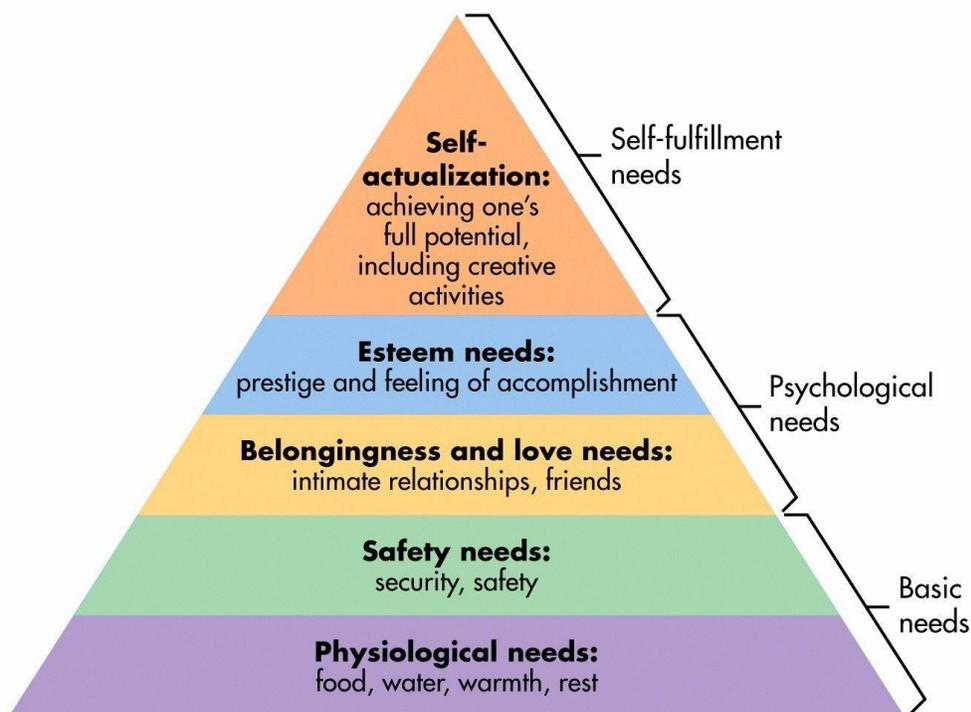


Figure 1: Maslow's theory of Needs sourced from Jerome (2013).

Maslow's theory has implications for our study. Academics that have attained a certain level of skill, knowledge, and attitude will usually want to continue to learn to attain higher skills, knowledge, and attitudes. For instance, an academic begins as a lecturer and keeps learning to become a senior lecturer, associate professor, full professor, and other distinguished awards. This should not mean an assistant lecturer making efforts to learn apart from their research; teaching and engaging in community service is not a learning academic. He would only have failed to be a learning academic if, in retirement, he remained an assistant lecturer. Learning academics with the quest for knowledge usually will end up being self-actualised (full professors).

Also, Ruvolo & Eaton (2013) developed a method for online multi-task learning in the lifelong learning setting relevant to our study. The Efficient Lifelong Learning Algorithm (ELLA) maintains a shared basis for task models, transfers knowledge from the basis to learning each new task, and refines the basis over time to maximise performance across all tasks.

The relevance of Ruvolo & Eaton (2013) to our study is that learning academics cannot be successful without multi-tasking. This multi-tasking component of their study propels our adoption of the Algorithm as a theoretical base for our study.

Literature Review

This section reviews the literature on continual learning and profiles selected African academics noted as learning academics.

Continual learning

The world around us is fast changing at a frantic pace, and if we do not keep growing and developing, we will be left behind. In the 21st century, we all need to be lifelong learners. We must continually keep our skills sharp and up to date to have an edge in all we do. Of course, we all naturally desire to learn to adapt to change, enrich, and fulfil our lives (Laal & Salamati, 2012).

Laal & Salamati (2012) propose a compelling reason why we must keep learning – being exceptional in what we do. Their study has implications for academics. To continually understand and exceed expectations in an academic field, one needs to be a learning academic; continually studying new trends in the area of study and outside of it, scouting for new learning methods, embracing change, and working with teams that offer new lines of thinking.

Although lifelong learning is increasingly cited as one of the key principles in education and development, an understanding of the term's usage at the international level is lacking. Lifelong learning is tied to the challenge of openness and the changes modern individuals must cope with within their lifetimes. Lifelong learning comprises both continuity and discontinuity in learned capacities over time as a result of interactions with the manmade environment--in other words, culture (Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako, & Mauch, 2001).

As stated earlier, the challenge of universality usage of life-long learning is not established, as noted by Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako, & Mauch (2001). Similar challenges may arise in learning academics since early efforts have not been made to populate the literature with who is and is not a learning academic.

Profiles of Selected African Learning Academics

Peter Akinsola Okebukola

Peter A. Okebukola, O.F.R., is a distinguished science and computer education professor at Lagos State University, Nigeria. He had specialised science and technology training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) and Harvard University, both in Cambridge, U.S.A. He is a Fellow of the International Academy of Education and, between 1998 and 2007, was the African Representative on the Executive Committee of the International Council of Associations for Science Education. He is a Fellow of the Science Association of Nigeria

(SAN), Fellow and President of the Nigerian Association for Environmental Education, and past President of the Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN). He was concurrently the Chairman of the Council of four Nigerian universities. He is currently the Chairman of the Council of the National Open University of Nigeria, Board of Trustees, Crawford University, Chairman, Board of Trustees of Caleb University, Member, Board of Trustees of Bells University of Technology Afe Babalola University and Executive Chairman, Okebukola Science Foundation. He was Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission. He has been awarded several honorary D.Sc degrees. He is the recipient of the National Honour of the Officer of the Order of the Federal Republic- O.F.R. He was Chairman of the US-based Advisory Council of the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG).

He was Director of the Virtual Institute for Higher Education Pedagogy and Co-Director of UNESCO's Virtual Institute for Higher Education in Africa. He has been a lead facilitator in online training to over 10,000 academics in 62 universities. He was the leader of the E-learning Programme for federal civil servants in Nigeria, involving over 70,000 participants. He has served as team leader of several quality assurance projects involving UNESCO, the African Union, the World Bank, the Association of African Universities, and the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI-Africa). His research efforts have gravitated around five central themes - computers in education and e-learning. The rest are cooperative learning, metacognitive strategies in science education, environmental education, and eco-cultural influences on learning science concepts. These efforts have resulted in over 160 internationally published works and 200 national and international conference presentations.

Juma Shabani

Professor Juma Shabani is currently President of the Burundi National Commission for Higher Education; Director of the Doctoral School of the University of Burundi; President of the International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa; President of the Burundi Academy of Sciences and Technology, President of the International Advisory Board of the Africa Centre of Excellence for Innovative and Transformative STEM Education at Lagos State University, Nigeria; Member of the High-Level Panel of the Pan African University, Coordinator of the African Union Quality Assurance Sub-cluster of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa; Fellow of the African Academy of Sciences and The World Academy of Sciences for the advancement of science in developing countries.

Professor Shabani's credentials are reflective of one who continually learns. It should be noted that Professor Shabani's role at the doctoral School is an appointment he accepted after retiring from UNESCO, reflective of one who learns and also impacts knowledge.

Hortense Atta Diallo

Hortense Atta Diallo has been a Full Professor of Plant Pathology since 2014. She has held several positions within the University NANGUI ABROGOUA: Technical Advisor to the President of the university (2007-2009), Director of the Plant Production Research Pole (2014-2019), and Director of Cabinet of the President since 2010. Since November 2016, she has been the Vice-President of Planning, Programming, and External Relations at UNA. Her competencies include plant pathology, plant disease diagnostic, plant protection, monitoring and evaluation (projects), quality assurance in higher education, and higher education management. Professor Atta Diallo has benefited from several training and capacity-building activities, some self-funded, others through grants. Professor Atta Diallo has coordinated several research projects, including the Project "Methods for controlling pests and diseases of cassava and yam" funded by the West African Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP) and the fight against the lethal yellowing disease of coconut funded by IDRC and Global Affairs Canada.

Since July 2019, Professor Atta Diallo has been a member of the Scientific Advisory Panel of the One Planet Fellowship, an initiative of the "African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD)" and the Agropolis Foundation, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Fondation BNP Paribas, and the European Union (E.U.). In March 2020, Professor Atta Diallo became a member of the Scientific Council of the Fund for Science, Technology and Innovation (FONSTI) in Cote d'Ivoire). She is also a member of the International Scientific Advisory Board of the Lagos State University Africa Centre of Excellence for Innovative and Transformative STEM Education (LASU-ACEITSE). In September 2021, Professor Atta Diallo was nominated to serve on the WASCAL Scientific Advisory Committee (The S.A.C.). Professor Atta Diallo is also a member of several professional associations and networks, including the Organisation for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD); and the *"Association des Femmes Chercheurs de Côte d'Ivoire"* (AFEMC-CI).

Damtew Teferra

Dr Damtew Teferra is a Professor of Higher Education and leader of Higher Education Training and damtew-picDevelopment at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. He is the founder and director of the International Network for Higher Education in Africa, earlier at the Center for International Higher Education (CIHE), Boston College. He has been with the University of KwaZulu-Natal for over ten years now. Prof. Teferra is the former director for Africa and the Middle East of the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program in New York. He is the (former) founding Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of African Higher Education (former), the International Journal of African Higher Education, and the Chronicle of African Higher Education. He is the author of *Scientific Communication in African Universities: External Assistance and National Needs* (Routledge Falmer, 2003) and the award-winning books' lead (and sole) editor.

He has been consulting for and closely working with multiple regional and international organisations, including UNESCO, African Union, European Union, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German agency for international development cooperation (G.I.Z.), Association of African Universities, Inter-University Council for Eastern Africa, among others. He continues to present at numerous conferences and symposia as keynote speaker, panel member, and speaker in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America

Adamu Abebaw Yirga

Abebaw Yirga Adamu is an associate professor of higher education at Addis Ababa University. He holds PhD in Education and Society from the University of Tampere, Finland; an M.A. in Lifelong Learning Policy and Management from the University of Aarhus, University of London, and the University of Deusto; MEd in Multicultural and Multilingual Education from Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia; Adamu was director of the Ethiopian Institute for Higher Education, and director of quality assurance at EiABC, Addis Ababa University. He was NAFSA Global Dialogue Fellow (2019-2020) and IREX Research Management Fellow (2019). He is a member of the education sector professional advisory council of the Ministry of Education, Ethiopia. Dr Adamu is a member of the Comparative and International Education Society; and Erasmus Mundus Student and Alumni Association, African Students Alumni Forum. He is also an Advisory Board Member of the Ethiopian Journal of Social Sciences. His research interest includes higher education (policy, diversity, quality, internationalisation, harmonisation, and leadership) and lifelong learning policy and management.

Gift Masaiti

Professor Gift Masaiti specialised in Economics and Management of Education. He brings theoretical and practical knowledge in Economics and Management of Education with a bias to education financing, especially higher education. He has a track record of 16 years of consulting in Zambia's Education Sector and other public sectors in selected African Countries: Lesotho, South Africa, Namibia, Malawi, Tanzania, Botswana, Mozambique, Senegal, and Ethiopia. Professor Masaiti has had opportunities to collaborate with universities in England, Norway, the U.S.A., China, and Japan. At the corporate level, he has worked as a Technical Advisor for different Organisations for evidence-based planning, financing, budgets, and costings. More recently, he has been researching and developing financing frameworks in higher education, including loans and scholarships.

Gift has also been involved in commissioned and grant-aided research in organisations such as the European Union, World Bank, USAID, JICA, UNESCO, British Council, ZANEC, UNICEF, Ford Foundation, World Vision, and Plan International, among others. He has evaluated (impact evaluation) and engaged in more than 25 local and international consultancies and projects. I have

published more than 50 journal and book articles and three books. Professor Masaiti is currently working for the University of Zambia as Assistant Dean in charge of research in the School of education. He has presented more than 45 papers at local and international conferences, mostly in Education Economics, management, financing, and education policy. He has also facilitated numerous workshops locally and globally. He has supervised (More than 50) and examined (More than 50) master's and 10 PhD candidates. He brings integrity to the research project and the commitment to the project if given an opportunity. Such engagement is also in line with University's Strategic Plan, where researchers must engage the community to provide expertise.

Joseph Abuga Orayo, Margaret Ngugi, Amanuel Genetu Tirune, Adeola Michael Dahuns, Fanuel Letting, Zaccheus Sheh, Cedrick Mulowayi, Annabel Banda, DJUIDJE CHATUE Ide Armelle, and Wycliff Arisi are PhD candidates who won grants for the 2022 INHEA master class funded by the Master Card Foundation. They are lecturers, assistant lecturers, and others in different African universities.

Methodology

This study was carried out using a Documentary Research Methodology (DRM) and interviews. The literature was analysed primarily as a descriptive study to provide baseline information on learning academics in Africa. This entailed a review of relevant websites, published papers, books and newspaper opinions on the subject. Some studies have employed the DRM and found it to help provide data for study (e.g., Chen Huang & Li, [2020](#); Phi, [2020](#); Seraphin & Dosquet, [2020](#)). Though this technique has been criticised for its sensitivity to different interpretations and applications, it has several advantages and strengths.

The capacity to keep the originality of the data is one of the most important. The data gathering method does not interfere with or jeopardise the data. Second, because the writers of such papers do not pre-condition them for future use, this strategy prevents researcher bias. DRM also makes data gathering easier because data may be retrieved from the desk (Ahmed, [2010](#)). A full bibliography of information sources reviewed is given in the references section.

The study complemented the DRM with interviews as a basis for further interrogating the academics when the need arose for further interrogations. The academics were chosen based on (a) desire to acquire more knowledge at all times, (b) desire to be exceptional amongst their colleagues, (c) making efforts to have resources to embark on their quest for knowledge, (d) ability to work with other generations of academics, and (e) ability to endure academic pressure.

Although other academics qualified within the criterion set, the researchers skewed the sampling to convenience to choose the sampled academics.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Names	Gender	Institution	Rank
Juma Shabani	Male	University of Burundi	Full Professor
Peter Okebukola	Male	Lagos State University	Full Professor
Hortense Atta Diallo	Female	University Nangui Abrogoua	Full Professor
Damtew Teferra	Male	University of KwaZulu-Natal – South Africa	Full Professor
Joseph Abuga Orayo	Male	Technical University of Kenya	Assistant Lecturer
Margaret Ngugi	Female	Alupe University College-Kenya	Lecturer
Amanuel Genetu Tirune	Male	Bahir Dar University and Debark University-Ethiopia	Lecturer
Adeola Michael Dahuns	Male	University of Abomey-Calavi-Benin Republic	Other
Fanuel Letting	Male	Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology-Tanzania	Other
Zaccheus Shehu	Male	Gombe State University-Nigeria	Lecturer
Cedrick Mulowayi	Male	National Higher School for Hydraulics (Algeria) and the University of Kinshasa (D.R.C.)	Assistant Lecturer
Annabel Banda	Female	Gwanda State University-Zimbabwe	
DJUIDJE CHATUE Ide Armelle	Female	University of Yaounde I-Cameroun	Lecturer
Wycliff Arisi	Male	Africa university-Zimbabwe	Other
Proscovia	Female	Uganda	Associate professor
Gift Masaity	Male	University of Zambia	Associate Professor

Abebaw Yirga Adamu	Male	Addis Ababa University-Ethiopia	Associate Professor
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Qualities of Learning Academics

From the definitions and profiles of the selected African academics, we inferred that some qualities propel their continual learning;

Learning Academics Learn to Acquire more knowledge

Learning academics usually want to acquire more knowledge. The quest for superior knowledge seems to be the precursor to learning academics. It appears that usually, there is some knowledge that needs to be filled. In their quest for this, they learn further in a bid to find the solutions. For instance, Okebukola had asked why many students fail in science courses. His quest for an answer led to the continual probing of the question from the 1980s until he finally propounded the Culturo-Techno-Contextual Approach (CTCA) as an alternative teaching method to enhance students' understanding of scientific concepts.

According to him, several tools can be used to break barriers to meaningful learning, CTCA being one of them (Okebukola, 2020). By extension, CTCA is offered as one of the numerous tools in the teacher's toolkit that can be useful in breaking these barriers. It can be explored if the goal is to promote meaningful learning. The CTCA argues that cultural, traditional or indigenous knowledge is one of the key influences on pupils/students' understanding of science.

The CTCA further proffers that if a pupil or student's culture or indigenous knowledge is the basis of teaching, the traditional barriers to understanding science will be broken.

The ensuing from the lenses of Okebukola is a testament that the acquisition of more knowledge to solve societal problems propels learning academics to keep learning. To further bolster the acquisition of knowledge as a key feature of learning academics, the words of Hortense **Atta Diallo** are worth reporting;

I love learning new things and acquiring new knowledge. I am engaged in lifelong learning, and I also have several interests. I am therefore always looking for some new, interesting, specific theme to learn, apply and share with others.

Margaret Nguigi's answers were not too different;

I am passionate and curious about things I do not know, so I make a lot of effort to fuel my passion and curiosity by learning what can be learned to fulfil the passion and curiosity.

Further, the response of **Amanuel Genetu Tiruneh** are pointers that learning academics usually want to acquire more knowledge;

The more I know, the more I find myself involved in the world, so since I want to make an impact, I want to keep learning.

Similar responses were garnered from other participants who took part in the study.

The joy of getting solutions to a problem that has been identified or given makes me desire to always find an improved and efficient way of getting the result. Even after getting the result, I tend to always open my mind to other ways to make the work reproducible by anyone. - Adeola Michael Dahunsi

Learning is a daily process in our day to day life. New knowledge, perspectives and shared experiences are important to guide and help young Academicians as they aspire to scale their careers. In my life, I strive to learn and be an all-rounded person as well as be specialised in my field- Fanuel Letting

I have joined different social media such as research gate, LinkedIn, academia and Twitter to keep learning widely- Zaccheus Shehu

My passion for science and learning keeps me motivated to learn more to solve societal problems - Cedrick Mulowayi

I read widely and engage with different people to gain more knowledge- Annabel Banda

Indeed, curiosity developed my desire to know more, acquire knowledge, discover things, understand, and find answers to the questions I had. To reach this goal, I had to follow a learning process, for example, by going to School by pursuing my university studies. I developed qualities such as effort, humility, and courage and doubled my motivation during this process. All these qualities have been assets to continue learning.- DJUIDJE CHATUE Ide Armelle

Knowing more means getting additional qualifications. This then creates a desire to want to keep learning- Wycliff Arisi

Learning Academics have a Quest to be exceptional in their areas of practice

Also, learning academics usually want to be exceptional. Being exceptional as an academic does not come through any other means but continual learning. To understand their areas of study, academics usually will tend to be learning academics. This gives them the advantage of setting themselves academically apart from their colleagues. This is reflective in the interviews conducted on the participants.

Hortense Atta Diallo

Yes; I indeed thrive on being very good at what I do. And, more importantly, to impact the lives of others (be it one person at a time). Therefore, I need to be ahead and keep learning. How could you share something you do not know or know much about?

Proscovia

My family background motivates me to want to be exceptional- be an example for my family, students and children. I want to build a brand as an education specialist, especially in branding and quality assurance. We do not have many curriculum specialists on the continent so being exceptional will help me build the career of others and become a role model for women. My networks always identify and pull me up for collaboration, which motivates me apart from institutional support. The academic flyers or industry leaders are also a motivation; their availability and willingness to engage me. Technology also motivates me.

*I like being outstanding, and so I believe in consistency and persistency. This makes me look for collaborators both locally and globally to achieve my vision - **JOSEPH ABUGA ORAYO***

*I research more in different fields similar to mine so that, apart from the field, I can be outstanding wherever I find myself. - **Margaret Ngugi***

*To survive and fight the marginalisation, we have to be exceptionally good at Academics, so for this reason, I want to keep learning- **Amanuel Genetu Tiruneh***

*The fact that you have to evolve to stand out keeps me on my toe. Even as a PhD candidate, the need to give progress reports to supervisors and funders makes it paramount that I keep learning and relearning so my work will be worth awarding a PhD degree.- **Adeola Michael Dahunsi***

*Branding myself has been key for me to be unique and stand out. This includes both academic and interpersonal skills. Through interactive sessions with my seniors and juniors, I have gained a lot of skills that have moulded me.- **Fanuel Letting***

Of course, one needs to put exceptional input to be exceptional in academics. In the last five years, I have published at least 40 articles. I'm also a certified reviewer by publons which is a subset of the web of science- **Zaccheus Shehu**

The desire to be a world-class scholar drove me to continue learning to set myself apart from the crowd.- **Cedrick Mulowayi**

I like to stand out. I have collaborated and published book chapters in Springer and reputable journals. It has made me enrol for DPhil studies- **Annabel Banda**

I would say that when you have a goal and objectives to achieve, you are always looking for knowledge and skills that can help you succeed. To this end, one must be highly motivated, maintain a positive attitude, be resilient, and be humble to continue learning from others and leaders.- **DJUIDJE CHATUE Ide Armelle**

The current technological advancement and innovations have contributed greatly to my desire for more knowledge. Moreover, the increase in quality standards and stiff competition which rewards the best suited has also pushed me to keep learning.- **Wycliff Arisi**

Learning Academics Make Efforts to Have Resources to Embark on Their Quest for Knowledge

Further, learning academics usually make efforts to have resources to embark on their quest for knowledge. Without the appropriate learning resource, it may be difficult for one desirous of being a learning academic to achieve that feat. For instance, in the era of technology, it is near impossible not to have stable internet, a computer, or related devices for learning. These apart, there are some academic software, including Grammarly premium, SPSS, Microsoft Word, and plagiarism checkers that enhance continual learning. International conferences to share and learn knowledge also comes with their attendant costs. These and others require extensive resourcing to be able to achieve. To achieve the learning academic status, one will need to acquire these resources to aid the achievements of learning.

The words of **Professor Hortense Diallo** complimented these claims

I have been able to mobilise resources to keep learning. It has not always been easy, but I did. Several resources: self-funding; grant applications; invitation to attend workshops, training courses through national and international collaborations; online learning (free or paid). My university has also given me resources to keep learning. Most importantly, giving me the time for it. There is a need to mention also human and technical resources. There are all very important.

My savings and support from close allies have assisted in my growth in education. **JOSEPH ABUGA ORAYO**

I make efforts to get grants and aid from my Institution whenever I need to embark on academic activities like conferences - **Margaret Ngugi**

Well, this has been a problematic area, but if we have enough desire to keep learning, we will find a way- **Amanuel Genetu Tiruneh**

I apply for funding for PhD students and tap into resources available at my home and partner institutions. I have benefited from several collaborative works by myself, my supervisors, and my Institution. - **Adeola Michael Dahunsi**

Yes. I was able to win A University grant worth USD 5000 in my university to enhance research in which one master's student was involved in the research. Similarly, I won RUFORUM GTA Grant worth USD 12000 for my research which I am currently finalising.- **Fanuel Letting**

I used my salary for research and publications. - **Zaccheus Shehu**

By knocking on facilitators' doors, I was able to organise resources to continue learning. - **Cedrick Mulowayi**

I will work and pay for my fees. Nowadays, I write for scholarships- **Annabel Banda**

I have applied for many grants funded by international organisations. I recently got a mobility grant that will provide me with financial resources to continue my thesis work. In addition, my supervisors support me in any way they can, and occasionally I do odd jobs. - **DJUIDJE CHATUE Ide Armelle**

Through networking and collaboration. And mostly as a reward for my hard work and exceptional performance- **Wycliff Arisi**

Learning Academics Work with Other Generations of Academics

Another quality relative to learning academics is that they usually work with other generations of academics. This seems to find so much truth in the words of the interviewees.

Hortense Atta Diallo

I have no problem with intergeneration work. Yes, I have attended workshops or training with older or younger generations of academics. It is just enriching. We learn from each other.

Proscovia

I am most motivated to build the capacity of younger academics to leave a legacy and have young energy around me through delegations and mentorship (Scaffolding). The eagerness and willingness of the younger academics also propel my desire to work with them.

Professor Gift Masaity

The first motivation is mentorship, knowing that I grew through the ranks and will also need to mentor others. Mentorship in scholarship, collaboration, and community engagements. I have also mentored many in the area of writing and funding papers. Also, leveraging different skill sets and expertise in different areas.

I haven't been lucky enough to collaborate with or mentor others, but after the masterclass and HEFAALA workshops, I am hoping for much collaboration- **Amanuel Genetu Tiruneh**

One of the attributes of a learning academic is the desire to mentor the next generation of learners, which warrants that I carry along with my peers and my junior colleagues in every stage of my career since my undergraduate days. These relationships have come in the form of partnership in applying for grants, writing articles together as well as sharing opportunities for growth with one another. - **Adeola Michael Dahunsi**

I am in charge of 44th-year projects for the last 6 years at my university. I have been able to supervise 17 undergraduates who were able to gain through my experience. - **Fanuel Letting**

Yes, I have been working with senior colleagues from Nigeria and Iran. I have also been working with my students, and as such, there is at least one student in each of my articles. - **Zaccheus Shehu**

To work with other generations of academics, I had to be open to communication, break barriers, reach out to others, and share my interests. Their experiences and advice have shaped me and given me the strength to continue learning.- **DJUIDJE CHATUE Ide Armelle**

Through engaging with the college staff and students, new challenges come up that force me to look for answers -**Wycliff Arisi**

Learning Academics work under academic pressure

Finally, learning academics can endure academic pressure. This is reflective of the profiles of the academics reviewed in this study. For instance, Professor Peter Okebukola, apart from being the Facilitator General of the VICBHE, is also a teacher at Lagos State University and the University of Burundi. Professor Shabani has a lineup of activities, including head of the Doctoral School of the University of Burundi and lecturer at the Lagos State University. This is further reflective of the response of Professor Hortense Atta Diallo;

I had to learn to deal with pressure. Pressure to be good at what we do, pressure from myself, pressure for efficiency... There may be time and financial constraints. However, you will find ways to keep learning when you have the will, determination, clear goals, and some creativity. Also, knowing that you may fall but you will rise again helps.

Gift Masaiti

Coming from Southern Africa, I have the impetus to contribute to knowledge production through research, publication, and public engagements. These motivate me to work hard. Collaboration has also motivated me in my area of research in the region, country, and across borders. A further motivation is productivity with student supervision and also supervise theses.

I also endure academic pressure through collaborations with young authors, networks, building teams, putting systems in place, using editors and data collections specialists, stress management, sometimes getting out of academia(leaves), and sometimes banking my work.

*The fact that academia is a passion makes it easier to endure the various rigorous pieces of training and stress involved. The desire to get better also makes me look away from the pain and focus on the gain. It pays off in the long run- **Adeola Michael Dahunsi***

*I have been able to endure Academic pressure by continuously setting my goals and working toward meeting the deadlines for these goals. I also have a working colleague checking on my progress to ensure I finish my set goals. - **Fanuel Letting***

*Patience and endurance are not enough to make anyone successful; perseverance is needed. Above all, I do not succumb to defeat. - **Zaccheus Shehu***

*I organise myself, do not take all the work on my back, and share the work with my team. I work together with others to be stronger and produce quality work. .- **DJUIDJE CHATUE Ide Armelle***

The status of a learning academic

While many may consider learning academics as those being at the post and receiving salaries for teaching at universities, it is to be noted that a learning academic is not necessarily one at the post in a traditional university, teaching and receiving salaries. There is a recent departure from this initial thinking, as evidenced by many retired academics keeping themselves busy in the learning process (although they are not at the post in any university). It is, therefore, to be noted that a learning academic's status can be either a serving faculty or a retired faculty. For instance, in the review of the African academics, it will be noted that, while Diallo, Damtew, Fanuel, Margeret, and Gift are still in service, Okebukola and Shabani are retired but still learning and imparting knowledge.

It is further to be noted that learning academics are not tied to an official status like a dean, head of the department, coordinator of a program, director, and others. The underlining features of learning academics are hinged on their quest to keep improving themselves and contribute to solving the world's challenges by creating and disseminating knowledge.

Approaches to learning and teaching of learning academics

Learning academics by their qualities and orientations excel in both learning and teaching. They usually will find out new ways of teaching and learning in a bid to excel and also ensure their students excel. This notion is reflective of the very novel models of teaching and learning adopted by some learning academics within the covid period. For instance, before the mass introduction of online teaching within the African region due to the covid 19 pandemic, two learning academics, Professor Juma Shabani and Professor Peter Okebuola, adopted online teaching and learning for their doctoral students. The uniqueness of their model was that students took lessons from each of the two universities ensuring mutual exchange of knowledge by these Professors for students in both universities. This made students attain cross-national knowledge with the aid of the internet.

Learning academics, as a result of their experiences, also find alternative and effective teaching methods that inure to the benefits of their students. For instance, Professor Peter Okebukola of the Lagos State University considered learning academic by our definition and invented the CTCA as an alternative teaching method to enhance students understanding of concepts. His teaching model has since witnessed some studies proving its efficacy (see Awaah, Okebukola, Shabani, Aabove, Onuogbeda, and Agbanimu, 2021).

Research and knowledge production of learning academics

Learning academics understand that to continue learning, and they also need to contribute to knowledge for the benefit of others. In line with this, they produce and mentor others to produce knowledge through research.

For instance, within three years, Professor Okebukola and Professor Shabani assisted doctoral students under their supervision in research and publishing in peer-reviewed journals for the consumption of others. Further, Professor Okebukola's knowledge production reflects his google scholar citations standing at 6387 as of Tuesday, 3rd May 2022. To produce knowledge, he continually contributes to diverse literature through publications (see Okebukola (2015); Okebukola, (2020). Okebukola, (2021); Okebukola, Ige, Oyeyemi, Olusesi, Owolabi, Okebukola, & Osun, (2016).

Shabani has also written extensively to complement the research and knowledge production within and outside the continent (see Shabani, 1995; Shabani, 200; Shabani, 2013; Shabani, Okebukola, & Oyewole, 2014). Worth noting about the works of Shababni is the continuity with which he has produced and published knowledge in different generations, as evidenced in his publications catalogued in this study (1995, 2007, 2013, and 2014, 2021). These exemplify a learning academic's research and publication energy being multi-generational.

While the first categories seem to be anglophone, Hortense Atta Diallo has also shown enviable writings in the francophone and anglophone literature to demonstrate research and knowledge production. She has done this with her colleagues, mentees and senior academics (see Rosete, Diallo, Konan Yankey, Saleh, Pilet, ... & Scott, (2017). ; Yeyeh, Diallo, Akinbade, Séka, & Kumar,(2014); Kwadjo, Beugré, Dietrich, Kodjo, Diallo, Yankey, ... & Rosete,(2018); Elamrani1, Amadji, Ndimubandi, Tankou, Offei, Taky Diallo, & Oyewole. (2013); Diallo, Tano, Agneroh (2018).

The work of Damtew Teferra is worth citing in this context. He is the editor-in-chief of the International Journal of African Higher Education. While his position is the gateway between allowing good knowledge into the education literature and rejecting nonconformant ones, Damtew has also shown extensive expertise and research as registered in literature. Like his colleague's, a few of his studies are reported in this study (see, Teferra, (2014); Fomunyan & Teferra, (2017); Tamrat & Teferra, (2018). These are drawn to showcase his knowledge production as a learning academic.

The Learning Academic and Maslow's Theory of Need

There appears to be a certain connection between the features of learning academics and Maslow's theory of needs. The theory posits that human needs begin from physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation. This can be interpreted in line with the progress or lack thereof of an academic. Academics usually will start at a lower rank e.g., an assistant lecturer. They may stay there until retirement if they cannot meet the requirements of publications and others to guarantee them upward promotion to the position of a lecturer. Here, we see the works

of Maslow reflecting. Maslow argues that needs that are lower in the hierarchy must be satisfied before thinking of higher-level needs. In the case of one employed as an assistant lecturer, the person can be considered at the physiological level. His ability to move to full lecture would have meant he had moved from physiological to safety. The same processes are required for this lecture to move to the position of senior lecturer, associate professor, and full professor. Maslow's theory plays out in all of these stages since one cannot skip any of the stages; one stage must be fulfilled before the other.

It is observed that learning academics that are diligent at publishing, attending conferences, teaching, engaging in community service and being exceptional get self-actualised by attaining professorship. In contrast, non-learning academics usually will be stagnant at the physiological or safety needs level. This has been the case for most academics that retired as lecturers or other ranks below the professorial ranks. The nexus between the learning academic and Maslow's need theory reflects the learning academic needs concept in figure 2.

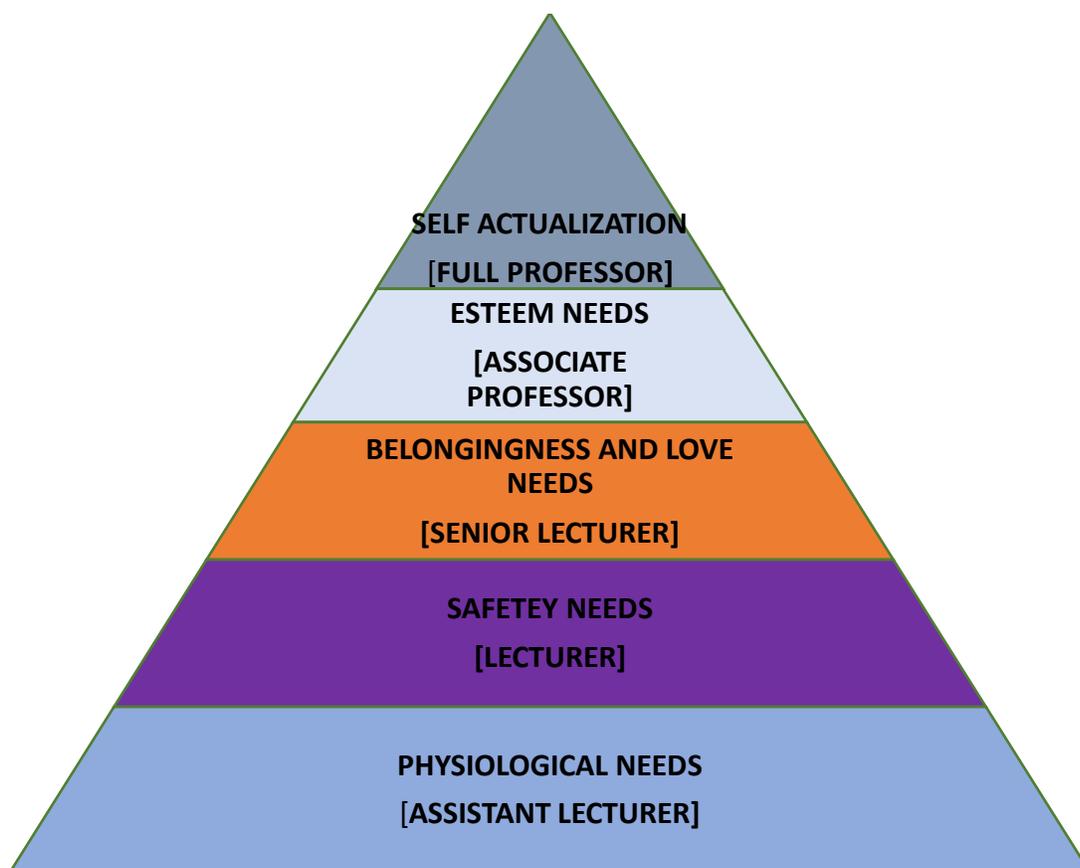


Figure 2: The learning academic Needs concept

From the ensuing and the graph, we will situate Professors Okebukola, Shabani, Damtew, and Hortense as having self-actualized as learning academics since they have attained the peak of being full professors. Professors Proscovia, Gift, and Abebaw are at the esteem level of associate professors, while there is no senior lecturer (belonging and love needs) profiled for the study. At the lecturer level (safety needs), we see DJUIDJE CHATUE Ide Armelle, Zaccheus Shehu, Margaret Ngugi, and Amanuel Genetu Tirune. The assistant lecturers (Cedrick Mulowayi, Joseph Abuga Oray and Joseph Abuga Orayo) are at the physiological needs level.

Conclusion

This study sought to establish the identifying features of learning academics. Adopting a desk review method and interviews, the study suggests that learning academics want to know more, want to be exceptional, make efforts to have resources to embark on their quest for knowledge, work with other generations of academics, and can endure academic pressure.

Based on Maslow's theory of needs, we conclude that learning academics cannot be restricted to any such status as head of department, dean, or director but rather persons who work continually to self-actualise – becoming professors in the academic settings.

Acronyms

ACEITSE	Africa Centre of Excellence for Innovative and Transformative STEM Education
AFEMC-CI	<i>Association des Femmes Chercheurs de Côte d'Ivoire</i>
AWARD	African Women in Agricultural Research and Development
CTCA	Culturo-Techno-Contextual Approach
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DRM	Documentary Research Methodology
ELLA	Efficient Lifelong Learning Algorithm
EU	European Union
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
FONSTI	Fund for Science, Technology, and Innovation

GIZ	German Agency for International Development Cooperation
M.I.T.	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
OWSD	Women in Science for the Developing World
SAC	Scientific Advisory Committee
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WAAPP	West African Agricultural Productivity Programme
O.F.R.	Order of the Federal Republic-

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