Mapping the landscape of education research by scholars based in sub-Saharan Africa
Insights from the African Education Research Database

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Focus on education for development
Objectives of the African Education Research Database

• improve the visibility and accessibility of quality education research by scholars based in sub-Saharan Africa
• strengthen the use of this evidence in education policy and practice
• inform research priorities
• promote a community of education researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders in the region

https://essa-africa.org/AERD
Methodology

The database is publicly-accessible online collection of research by scholars based in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa):

• Social science research with implications for educational policy and practice in sub-Saharan Africa

• Peer-reviewed publications identified through structured searches of academic databases, and pearl-growing techniques

• Research published between 2010-2018

• For each study, information on: authors, gender, institutional affiliation, methods

• Up to 8 keywords were assigned to each study

• Key informant interviews with over 30 researchers in sub-Saharan Africa
Phases of education

Primary education (35%)  Secondary education (28%)  Higher education (24%)  AE (4%)  ECE (4%)  VET (3%)  Gen (3%)

AE = Adult education  
ECE = Early childhood education  
VET = Vocational education and training  
Gen = General education
Clustered into 8 thematic areas

Language and curriculum
Equitable, inclusive education
Institutional leadership, culture and facilities
Access to education

Teachers and teaching
Policy and financing
Students, learning, and assessment
ICT
Within thematic areas, some topics receive little attention

- Language and curriculum (1550 keywords count)
  - Subject areas (437)
  - Competencies and skills (435)
  - African and non-African languages (420)
  - Curriculum reform and relevance (230)
  - Textbooks (28)

- Equitable, inclusive education (887)
  - Poverty (272)
  - Gender (264)
  - Disability (166)
  - Ethnicity (56)
  - Conflict (24)

- Institutional leadership, culture & facilities (717)
  - Leadership and management (310)
  - Institutional culture (237)
  - Facilities (170)

- Access to education (639)
  - Participation (243)
  - Inclusive provision (166)
  - Alternative provision (106)
  - Exclusion (83)
  - Expansion of provision (41)

- Teachers and teaching (1027)
  - Pedagogy and instruction (491)
  - Teacher education (214)
  - Teacher knowledge and skills (148)
  - Teaching profession (105)
  - Workforce management (69)

- Policy and financing (801)
  - Policy (336)
  - Governance & financing (233)
  - Non-state actors (118)
  - Policy implications (114)

- Students, learning and assessment (564)
  - Learning outcomes (200)
  - Motivation & career aspirations (147)
  - Household factors for learning (96)
  - Assessment (85)
  - Student voice (36)

- ICT (340)
  - ICT in education (202)
  - ICT for teaching & learning (138)
- Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya alone account for around 40% of overall research output
- Fewer than 20 publications for 30 countries in the region (some possibly in other languages)
- Only 29% of authors female
Eight institutions are associated with 1/4 of research outputs.
Around 2/3 of publications do not include any cross-institutional collaboration (within or outside SSA)
Only 15% of publications report receiving funding.
Over half of research receiving funding is associated with South-North collaborations.
How research align with SDG 4

- SDG 4.1 Universal primary and secondary education
- SDG 4.2 Early childhood development and universal pre-primary education
- SDG 4.3 Equal access to technical, vocational and higher education
- SDG 4.4 Relevant skills for decent work
- SDG 4.5 Gender equality and inclusion
- SDG 4.6 Universal youth literacy
- SDG 4.7 Education for sustainable development and global citizenship
7 key lessons for investing in African-based education research (1-4)

1. **Increase funding** to education research by scholars based in SSA, particularly focused on under-researched areas such as early childhood and conflict.

2. **Promote dialogue between policymakers and researchers** based in SSA to identify further policy-relevant research related to education priorities.

3. **Direct funding towards equitable partnerships** between South-South and South-North institutions and researchers.

4. **Support training and capacity development** for researchers and institutions within sub-Saharan Africa on applying for competitive research grants; publishing in reputable journals; and developing strategies for research impact.
7 key lessons for investing in African-based education research (5-7)

5. Develop **research capacity particularly for countries with fewer publications**, including through promoting regional collaborations and networks.

6. **Target support towards female researchers** in sub-Saharan Africa, linked to addressing systemic barriers to girls and women in education.

7. Continue efforts to catalogue and promote education research from sub-Saharan Africa by **maintaining the African Education Research Database** hosted by an organisation based in the region.
For more information:

- African Education Research Database: https://essa-africa.org/AERD
- Additional resources at: www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/real/researchthemes/highereducation/mappingeducation/