SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE
CREATE MEANINGFUL CHANGE

ESSA
Education Sub Saharan Africa

ENHANCING EDUCATION RESEARCH IN AFRICA (EERA)

Intervention 1:

Developing African–led education research agendas

NOVEMBER 2024

> "Research must begin with the voices and lived experiences of those who inhabit the landscapes of inquiry; only then can it serve as a powerful tool for change."
>
> *Education Researcher*

This concept note describes a proposed intervention to support the development of education research agendas rooted in African policy priorities and local development goals, led by African education researchers and policy makers. A research agenda is a framework that guides enquiry. It is fundamental to ensuring that research projects are designed to address critical gaps in existing knowledge and shed light on real problems being experienced in practice and fundamental questions that will shape the field of education research. Research agendas determine what gets funded and ultimately, how society benefits (or fails to benefit) from the research being undertaken. A sound, strategically-informed and collaborative research agenda is the golden thread that links research to social impact.

This intervention is designed to be part of a wider system of interventions It was identified through an intensive consultation and participative planning process with African education researchers and policy makers[1], who highlighted the need for African-led education research agendas as a strategic leverage point.

🔗 Please visit the EERA project page at **bit.ly/3OOssDV.**

Why is this a crucial intervention for education research in Africa?

The education researchers who helped to formulate this intervention noted the absence of clearly defined research agendas at their respective institutions, at national level in many countries, and across regions. Currently, education research efforts are largely fragmented, making it difficult to prioritise and investigate critical education issues. In addition, those research agendas that do exist are generally determined and funded from outside Africa. This means that the overwhelming majority of education research being conducted on the continent is not aligned to any African frameworks for understanding where research is most urgently needed, nor what research would best support innovation and advancements in education. This hampers our ability to tackle Africa's education challenges and perpetuates a cycle of short-term, disjointed research.

The lack of African-led research agendas therefore weakens the entire field for education research (see the box below). The inverse is also true: By supporting the development of local education research agendas, the field of education research will be strengthened in the following catalytic ways:

→ Developing African-led education **research agendas** will forge vital partnerships and collaboration between education research institutions, researchers, policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders to define knowledge gaps and research priorities that deserve immediate attention. This will help to weave an eco-system for education research that attunes itself to the purpose of its work, thereby promoting relevance, alignment and impact

→ This intervention will contribute to the **knowledge base** of education research institutions in significant ways, by centring African thought leadership and drawing on African expertise in determining research priorities. African scholarship will benefit from greater epistemic freedom in the education sector, including the definition of research topics and design of research

methodologies most appropriate to African contexts. The kinds of research undertaken will have a cumulative effect on the discipline as it evolves, deepening domain expertise and opening up research pathways that are grounded in indigenous knowledge, local experience and Africa-led innovation.

🔗 See also **Intervention 3**, on the establishment of Research Chairs in education.

→ African research agendas are vital to catalysing local **resources** for education research. Several countries in Africa have institutional mechanisms for disbursing research funding – most often science granting councils or national research funds. Yet without coherent research agendas, it is difficult to see how governments, private sector role-players or African

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[1] This process and its outcomes, also referred to as the EERA consultations, are described in this report, by ESSA & Southern Hemisphere, 2024.

philanthropies would see the potential for impact of African education research.

↗ This intervention therefore works hand-in-hand with **Intervention 2**, which focuses on African funding for education research.

→ The development of African education research agendas will help to invigorate the **research culture** of institutions, by diversifying the field and allowing greater scope for collaboration, longer-term impact-orientated research, gender equity and social inclusion in the research community and synergies amongst researchers with different perspectives and expertise. Agendas could include emphasis on professional development for education researchers, especially early career researchers (ECRs).

↗ See **Intervention 5** for further guidance on how to support training and mentorship for education researchers.

A strong field for education research in Africa

Based on extensive input from African education researchers and policy makers, these five factors are critical to building a strong field for education research:

→ A dynamic **research agenda** that reflects African education research priorities.

→ A robust **knowledge base**, aligned with local development goals.

→ Sustainable **resources** to enable African-led research and dissemination.

→ A vibrant research **culture** that champions collaboration, gender equity and social inclusion.

→ Reliable **infrastructure** to support knowledge repositories, exchange and communication.

Acknowledgement: The consultation process above made use of Bridgespan's *Strong Field Framework.*

For more background information on why this intervention is crucial, read the situational analysis undertaken as part of this project, and/or explore how this intervention responds to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified by African education research stakeholders.

Aims and objectives of the intervention

The broad aims of this intervention are to strengthen the field for education research in Africa by:

→ Promoting cutting-edge, impactful education research that is not conceived of primarily to advance academic careers, but to have a meaningful impact on local education policies, practices and outcomes.

→ Addressing the disconnect between researchers, education decision-makers and practitioners, by promoting collaborations between stakeholders invested in education.

→ Challenging coloniality, epistemic power imbalances and fragmentation in the education research and funding terrain, by supporting African research leadership and intellectual independence.

→ Contributing to an enabling and inclusive research culture in which African education researchers, including women and ECRs, have opportunities to develop and apply their expertise in a dynamic and evolving education research sector.

In order to pursue these broad aims, the **specific objective** of this intervention is to support a range of options that will contribute to the development and strengthening of research agendas. Some examples are:
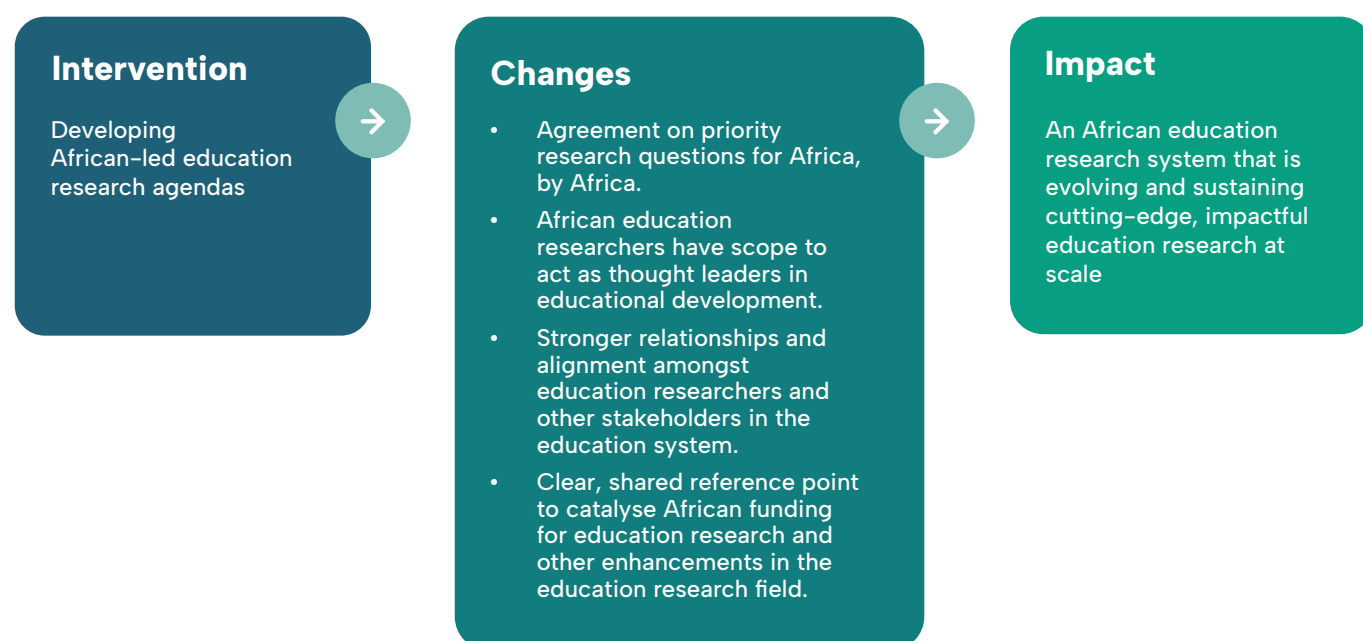
→ To support the participation of all relevant stakeholders in the identification of African education research priorities (at institutional, national and/or regional levels, as appropriate). By through meetings, conferences, networks and or research grants to support research agenda creation

→ To fund relevant stakeholders to develop a research agenda alongside education reforms and implementation plans (including education sector plans).

→ To support the development of research ideas and projects, that can be tested with potential collaborators as well as policy makers and implementers. These could be small grants to test the proof of concept.

→ To create spaces for African education researchers, and others, to deepen their thinking about education research and formulate research ideas that push new frontiers in education enquiry.

→ To foster meaningful cross-pollination between African research agendas, by supporting collaboration and knowledge exchange amongst African education researchers in the conceptualisation and design of research projects aligned with local agendas, across various domains.

Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of this intervention, informed by the EERA consultations, and the literature[2], are as follows:

→ **Outcome 1: Greater consensus among African education researchers, policy makers and other stakeholders as to the most pressing priorities for education research**. Evidence suggests that education research agendas in Africa are currently skewed by coloniality and North–South relations, and that this has a direct impact on the curricula, research priorities and agendas pursued by education researchers in Africa. Research undertaken and published by African scholars show little alignment with local development agendas, such as that of the African Development Bank. This intervention will help to reverse this situation.

→ **Outcome 2: Robust, coherent, impact–orientated African agendas for education research at institutional, country, and/or regional levels, as appropriate**. Studies targeting education research priorities in Africa are scarce, representing a substantial knowledge gap. A 2019 mapping exercise of the African Education Research Database (AERD) revealed important thematic areas lacking attention. It has been recognised that a clearly formulated, collectively–owned, research agenda helps in developing a robust knowledge base for local implementation, especially in poor and less equal settings. For policy makers and education

researchers in Africa, this is an essential starting point for improved synergy between education research and policy implementation. Funders will also have improved clarity on how they can support research that is most likely to have an impact on policy and practice.

→ **Outcome 3**: **Increased research leadership, African–led research innovation and academic independence amongst education researchers in Africa**. The role of African researchers in global knowledge production is marked by epistemic inequalities and power asymmetries. While international research collaborations are important, the corresponding divisions of labour and distribution of resources often entrench North–South disparities. This intervention advances epistemic justice in the education field.

→ **Outcome 4**: **Increased demand for education–related research data and evidence on the continent.** If all the conditions above are met, the assumption is that a more relevant research agenda, will also increase demand for further research from local policy actors.

These outcomes are seen to contribute to the following impact pathway:

Intervention		Changes		Impact
Developing African–led education research agendas	→	• Agreement on priority research questions for Africa, by Africa. • African education researchers have scope to act as thought leaders in educational development. • Stronger relationships and alignment amongst education researchers and other stakeholders in the education system. • Clear, shared reference point to catalyse African funding for education research and other enhancements in the education research field.	→	An African education research system that is evolving and sustaining cutting–edge, impactful education research at scale

[2] The sources referred to in this section are cited in full in the reference list at the end of this document and include Heleta, 2016; Cloete et al., 2018; Mitchell et al.,2020; ESSA & Southern Hemisphere, 2024; Tumwebaze, 2022; Rose et al, 2019; Ebersöhn, 2016; Gebremariam et al 2023.

Relevant examples of initiatives to develop African research agendas

While most African countries have governmental sector plans and planning frameworks for education, very few have substantive education research agendas that clearly set out how education research supports policy-making and education practice. However, some initiatives exist on the continent that seek to advance Africa-led research agendas, in various sectors, as summarised in the table below. The examples provide a basis for learning from existing African experience and for possible collaboration with other actors in the research eco-system.

Initiative	Detail
Ghana, through their Education Sector Research group (ESRG) set about to develop and prioritise a research agenda that builds on existing evidence and addresses emerging policy direction and challenges within the ministry of education.	The ESRG, with broad representation from the MoE, local academia, Community Based Organisations and Development Partners, produced an Education Sector Research Agenda (ESRA) document to serve as an important reference point and guide for academia and relevant stakeholders interested in supporting the MoE's research agenda. The document ensures that education research in Ghana is more focused and well targeted at addressing the relevant issues, with the goal of meeting the needs of duty bearers and policy makers. The following policy objectives are outlined in the document. Policy Objective: Improved Equitable Access to and Participation in Quality Education at all levels Policy Objective: Improved Quality of Teaching and Learning at all levels Policy Objective: Sustainable and Efficient Management of Education Service Delivery
Côte d'Ivoire is one of the sites supported by the Jacobs Foundation to create EdLabs. EdLabs are innovative partnerships designed to amplify the use of scientific evidence in shaping educational policies and their implementation.	EdLabs play a pivotal role in evidence prioritisation, assisting governments in defining their research agendas, and use their brokering functions to facilitate cohesive engagements between diverse stakeholders. Evidence prioritisation: This process focuses on pinpointing specific evidence requirements in collaboration with policymakers and the research community. Actions under this umbrella might entail crafting research agendas, setting research priorities, or engaging in horizon scanning. A practical approach to this process involves enabling the government to articulate its queries to researchers or fostering a dialogue between researchers and government officials to determine the pertinent questions. Essentially, this activity emphasises the formulation of research priorities and aids in shaping research agendas that align with governmental objectives.
The Africa Shared Research Agenda for ending Gender-based Violence	The Africa Shared Research Agenda (ASRA) for ending gender-based violence (GBV), published in 2023, is a set of research priority recommendations for the continent, which were identified through a rigorous and inclusive process involving a broad range of stakeholders and voices. Three groups were established to guide the development of the ASRA – a stewardship group, an advisory group and a regional expert group. A deliberate attempt was made by the initiative to decolonise the agenda-setting process and priorities. It made use of a seven-step participatory and iterative process, involving both technical and non-technical perspectives, to identify five key research domains, as well as 49 research questions, ranked in terms of priority. The aim is to use the ASRA for GBV to begin addressing gaps in the research terrain on the continent and to target funding towards the agreed research priorities.
Research Agenda on Climate Mobility in Africa	This research agenda was developed collaboratively in 2021 by more than 200 researchers, practitioners and policy experts working in Africa and beyond. The Universities of Nairobi and Pretoria were involved in convening some of the consultative workshops. The collective research agenda developed through the process identifies 15 proposals for priority research across a range of fields in law and policy, including climate change, disaster risk reduction, migration and human rights. The aim is for the agenda to serve as a guide for African researchers, research institutions and funding bodies.

Who will benefit most from this intervention?

Developing African-led education research agendas will benefit the following actors in the education eco-system:

- African education researchers (individuals and teams) who would be able to lead, and participate, in formulating research priorities in education and provide intellectual leadership in steering education research on the continent.

- Education policy makers, who would play a key role alongside education researchers and other stakeholders, to ensure that education research is directed towards critical areas of decision-making, policy planning and service delivery affecting education.

- Amongst the above, Research Chairs in education, who could develop longer-term research programmes aligned with a shared agenda, grounded in agreed local policy priorities.

  For more on Research Chairs, see **Intervention 3.**

- Partners in education research collaboratives whose research could both inform, and be informed by, **research agendas**.

- Funders, national science granting councils, research funds or other grant-making agencies, who would have a clear framework for targeting research funding for education.

  For more on African funding for education research, see **Intervention 2**.

- Members of higher education governance structures, such as senates and Vice Chancellors, who would enjoy the reputational advantage of being associated with research institutions that generate relevant, African-led, education research that is respected and used by policy makers and others.

- Researchers in other disciples who are interested in education, at other universities in the same country, and in other countries, who would benefit through interaction, collaboration and knowledge sharing focussing on African research agendas.

- Ultimately teachers, students and scholars, who would experience the benefits of improved policies and education practice, informed by robust, African-led, implementation-oriented research.

The chart below depicts the direct and indirect beneficiaries of this intervention.
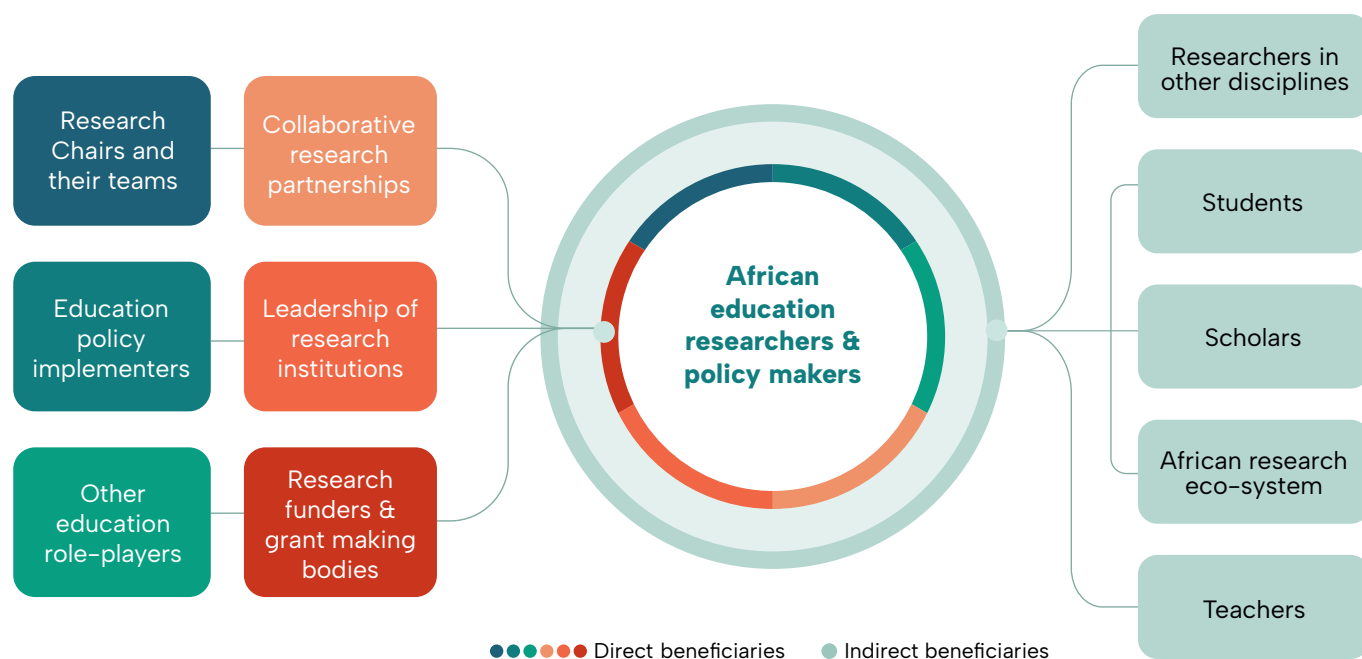
Designing this intervention: Important considerations

This section explores the design features to be taken into consideration when initiating this intervention. It is based on research into similar initiatives that seek to develop collaborative African research agendas, as well as consultations with African education researchers and policy makers.

Geographic scope

The focus of the intervention could be at institutional, national and/or regional levels, depending on further consultation and discussion. For example, in some countries there may be readiness and immediate interest amongst stakeholders to develop a coherent education research agenda for that country, informed by existing national education priorities and plans. This would, by implication, provide a framework for institutional level education research agendas in the corresponding higher education institutions and research institutes in that country. In other instances, a particularly strong education research institution or set of institutions, in a country or region, may want to initiate a process to develop an institutional or inter-institutional education research agenda in a particular focus area, like early childhood development. There may also be scope to develop regional education research agendas focussing on cross-cutting research topics and knowledge exchange around innovative methodologies in research design.

Gender, equity and social inclusion (GESI)

The development of collaborative African research agendas will require specific criteria for gender parity and the inclusion of marginalised voices at all levels of the intervention. This should extend to GESI considerations in determining:

→ **Participation in the agenda-setting process**: Groups developing the research agenda should seek to be gender balanced and to include participants from historically excluded groups (for example, those with disabilities), the perspectives of early career researchers, as well as the voices of those whom the research will seek to serve. The process design for the Africa Shared Research Agenda to end Gender-Based Violence (see table above) could provide further insights into how to ensure that participation processes for this intervention are designed with GESI as a key lens.

→ **Research themes and questions**: This intervention should seek to ensure that GESI considerations are integrated into all African-led research agendas and given due attention in the determination of research questions and priorities.

→ **Agenda implementation**: The research agendas developed through this intervention should consider including guidelines on how to advance GESI in the African education research sector, to ensure that women and other under-represented researchers are included in research design and thought leadership at intuitional levels. This may also include recommendations for effective tracking of GESI indicators related to education research.

→ **Collaborative research:** The examples highlighted above emphasise the need to prioritise collaboration; Support portfolios must include partnerships with organisations that effectively communicate and use evidence in policy-making. This might involve investing in research centres and think tanks dedicated to knowledge translation and evidence dissemination.

Appropriate structures

Further consideration will have to be given to the most appropriate structures to design, facilitate and champion the African education research agendas envisaged by this flexible intervention. It is clear that any undertaking of this nature will involve multiple stakeholders over a period of time, with possibly varying degrees of hands-on responsibilities. One option may be to have a single research institution with a strong track record or interest in education research, to act as lead facilitator of the process. This may be especially appropriate in those institutions who have established Research Chairs in education (see **Intervention 3** for more information on Research Chairs). Another option, could be to support a structure that sits alongside the implementation of education reform. Thought should also be given to which kinds of working groups or other temporary structures may be necessary to implement this intervention in different settings.

Participation, transparency and accountability

It will be important to develop a clear framework and practical guidelines for who should participate in setting education research agendas. While it is clear that education researchers and policy makers have a central role to play, further deliberation will be needed to define parameters for the participation of a broad range of other stakeholders, such as education administrators, qualifications authorities, curriculum designers, trainers, principals, school governing

bodies, teachers and teacher unions, amongst many others. In many cases, representative structures may exist to facilitate this involvement. Feedback must be gathered and integrated into the research agenda setting process.

Mechanisms should be considered to include the voices of children, both in and out of school, and parents. It would be necessary to define appropriate scales of child and youth participation, through guidelines on which children and youth, how many children and youth, and children and youth of what ages should be consulted, with due attention to ethical considerations and children's rights. Besides considering *who* should participate, the design of this intervention should also reflect on principles to guide the nature of participation for various stakeholders.

For the resultant education research agendas to have legitimacy and longevity, consideration should be given to ensuring transparency in the agenda-setting process and clarity on who would be accountable to implement the outcomes of the process. Given the unpredictability of policy shifts, there must be consensus on the essential focus areas. For example, a focus on early childhood development, or skills development for secondary school children will have broad political appeal and policy makers can adjust the themes that they can support but within the broader research agenda.

Mapping evidence and responding to need

The development of African education research agendas will require data on existing research as well as systems for identifying, mapping and tracking areas in need of attention. The afore-mentioned African Education Research Database, established by ESSA in partnership with the the Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre at the University of Cambridge, provides an invaluable resource towards this end. The aim of the database is to raise the visibility of African research, consolidate the evidence base for policy and practice, and inform future research priorities and partnerships. The design of this intervention could further explore how to build on and contribute to the AERD initiative. For example, the mapping exercise of African education research themes conducted in 2019 provides crucial insight into gaps in the education research field. Another more focused example is a recently launched project (also of ESSA and the REAL centre) to map the landscape of early childhood development research to include the first 1,000 days of a child's development (0–3 years) with a focus on education and its intersection with areas such as play activities, health and nutrition.
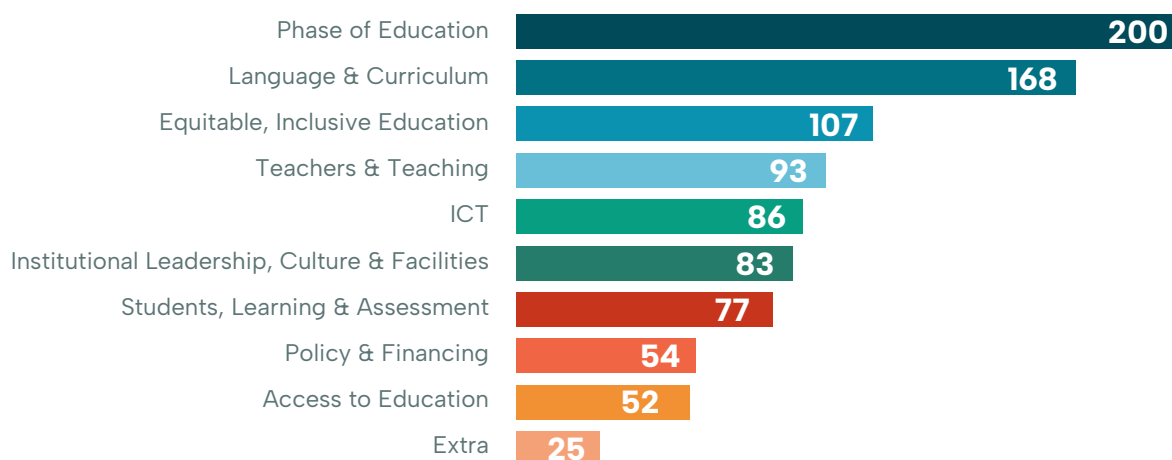
A recent rapid mapping of the AERD data base conduced for the EERA work, took a country level focus on Senegal and Kenya, with a focus on the sub-theme of Foundation Phase Literacy. The figure below shows that while there are some similarities in the research priorities of Kenya and Senegal, distinct differences exist. Kenya places greater emphasis on inclusivity and the structure of educational systems, whereas Senegal focuses more on digital technologies and institutional management. These variations highlight the specific challenges and opportunities within each country, pointing to the need for further research in under-explored areas, such as education financing and the role of ICT in education. This analysis demonstrates the power of local-level mapping as a starting point for developing local research agendas.

This intervention may also benefit from using mapping tools in other ways to match research outputs to local policy priorities. A joint statement by the African Ministers of Education and the Global Foundational Learning Coalition in 2024 made the call as follows: "We must be informed by accurate, reliable and comparable data, taking the time to measure learning outcomes early and well. Success will be built on a strong and reliable dataset, and we must work together to support more countries to collect, analyse and report on this data."
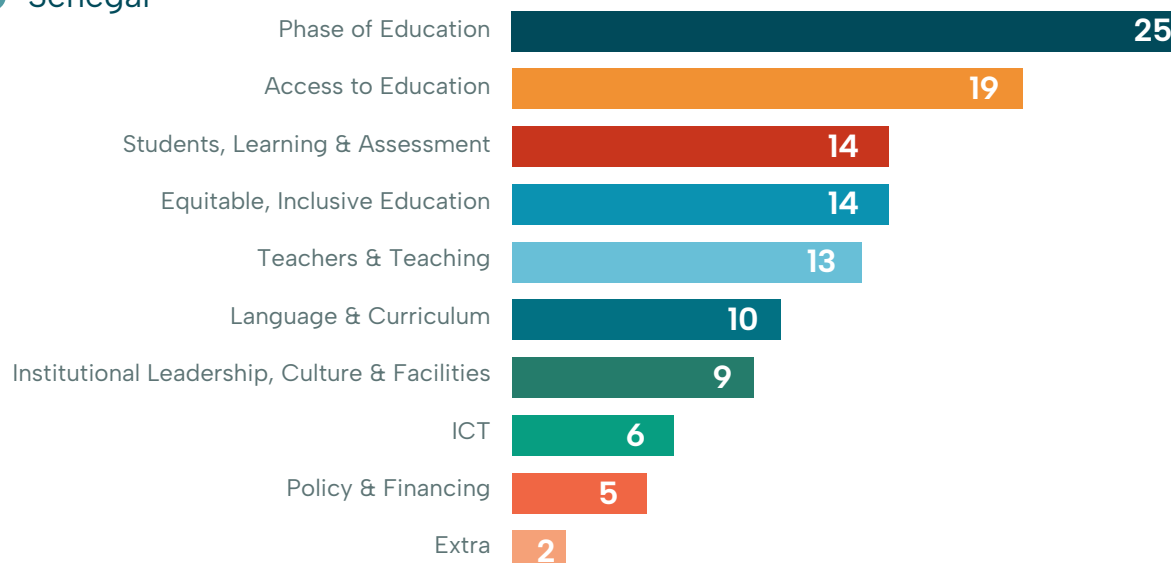
This prompts thinking about a research agenda not as a static list of questions, but rather as a dynamic and evolving 'living document' that is continuously informed by on-the-ground needs. For example, the Center for Rapid Evidence Synthesis (ACRES) in Uganda, responds to decision-makers' information needs by supplying relevant evidence, contextualised and summarised in an accessible package. The Center has also developed citizen engagement strategies to better understand how existing policies affect communities on the ground. The mapping of gaps, in collaboration with communities can lead to the identification of research priority areas that are more appropriate and relevant to a regional or national research agenda.

Publications by Component (thematic area in Foundation Phase Literacy) of education research in Kenya and Senegal

Kenya

Component	Value
Phase of Education	200
Language & Curriculum	168
Equitable, Inclusive Education	107
Teachers & Teaching	93
ICT	86
Institutional Leadership, Culture & Facilities	83
Students, Learning & Assessment	77
Policy & Financing	54
Access to Education	52
Extra	25

Senegal

Component	Value
Phase of Education	25
Access to Education	19
Students, Learning & Assessment	14
Equitable, Inclusive Education	14
Teachers & Teaching	13
Language & Curriculum	10
Institutional Leadership, Culture & Facilities	9
ICT	6
Policy & Financing	5
Extra	2

Communications and advocacy

For an education research agenda to have impact, institutions and research teams need to be aware of its existence and take it seriously as a guiding framework. Even when stakeholders have participated in an agenda-setting process, it will be important to include deliberate communication strategies to share the research agendas widely and advocate for them to be used actively to direct research funding and inform research planning at institutional levels. Ongoing communication with policy makers will also be essential to re-establish synergies as the research agendas are translated into programmes and projects, and as the education landscape and policy environment evolves.

The creation of African-led education research agendas will not transform the field overnight. Funding for education research is likely to remain fragmented and dominated by research priorities set outside of Africa, at least to some degree, for some time to come. It will require tenacity, patience and political will for African researchers to be able to fully implement the education research agendas flowing from this intervention.

Intervention 2, on catalysing African funding for education research, will be critical in supporting the transition from North-led to African-led education research.

Next Steps

If you would like to fund an intervention to develop African-led education research agendas, the following steps will help you to start planning your process:

1. **African leadership** in the Agenda setting process: It is likely that the initial phase of the agenda setting process will be funded by foreign donors. Hence, there may be a need to support African thinkers and planners to guide the process of funder prioritisation. There may be a need to support intermediary bodies that can assist and support the collective leadership agenda setting process. These can be existing groups who are well trusted in the space, and who have experience with collaborative work.

2. **Identify geographic scope:** Consider whether this intervention would be implemented on a country-by-country basis and if so, which countries may already have fertile ground to begin. Ideally, this intervention should be implemented in countries where **Intervention 2**, Catalysing African funding for education research, will be pursued. Also consider the scope for regional partnerships involving research institutions in multiple countries.

3. **Identify institutions and engage them:** Identify the institutions in the selected country or region that have the strongest track record in education research. These institutions could then be engaged in discussions together with policy makers and other stakeholders, to gauge local enthusiasm and potential commitment to active participation in the intervention. These could be individual institutions, or networks, such a Deans of Education forums.

4. **Evidence maps:** Support the development of evidence maps in collaboration with the institution(s) and policy makers to establish a better understanding of strengths and gaps in the current knowledge base. For example, it would be important to gain an overview of existing education research being undertaken in the country, major research funding sources and dependencies, and to build up a picture of how well current research is aligned to the policy terrain. The aim of this study will be to recognise important features of the education research field in the country context, including the particular needs of the education researchers and policy makers involved – including which areas are already well developed and could benefit from further support, and those where there is very little evidence.

5. **Stakeholder mapping:** Once you have determined the needs underpinning a research agenda-setting process in the country, the next step is to identify key actors and potential partners. For example, a core team might be made up of a lead education research institution and representatives from an education ministry or policy forum. There may also be existing forums and structures that could take on the development of a research agenda as part of their scope of work. Consider other stakeholders that should be included right from the start.

6. **Co-design with stakeholders:** The next step is to design a collaborative process for developing an education research agenda, or build on what already exists. Take into consideration the various issues raised in the previous section as regards GESI, appropriate structures, participation, accountability and transparency, data sources, communications and advocacy.

7. **Develop an education research agenda**: Support the implementation of the process above. It is essential for the lead institution(s) and policy makers involved to develop full ownership of the agenda process and its outcomes.

8. **Communicate, collaborate and advocate**: Encourage broad awareness-raising, discussion and joint planning around the newly established education research agenda. Advocate for funding to be directed to critical gaps in the knowledge base and important areas for developing African thought leadership.

9. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Engage in monitoring and evaluation of the intervention. This should include tracing shifts in education research trends towards the areas and themes identified and prioritised in the shared agenda, as well as greater visibility and research leadership amongst African education researchers. The framework can and should outline the feedback and communications strategies to be followed.

10. GESI indicators should reveal additional changes in the education research field over time.

Acknowledgements

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Annexure 1: SWOT Analysis and African agendas for education research

The table below depicts how developing Africa-led research agendas is expected to address the SWOT analysis undertaken by education research stakeholders as part of the EERA process.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Emerging initiatives: In some African countries, there are collaborative efforts between research institutions, researchers, local organisations, and education authorities to develop education research priorities. These initiatives of government-led research agendas (e.g., Kenya, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire) show a willingness to work together and align research with local challenges and educational goals.	**Lack of coherent agenda:** Data suggests that in many countries, there is absence of a coherent education research agenda, which can cause fragmented research efforts.
Increasing calls for partnerships: Increasing calls are emerging across the continent for partnerships between researchers, government agencies and organisations to align research with national priorities.	**Fragmented research**: In the absence of national research priorities and of supportive funds, education research institutions focus on their individual goals, which may not align with national priorities.
Alignment with local and global goals: Where available, there is recognition that education policies and research priorities align with the SDGs, particularly SDG-4, indicating researchers and decision-makers' commitment to addressing education challenges.	**Limited visibility:** A research agenda, where it exists, is often not widely shared or communicated, limiting its impact and usefulness.
	Short-term thinking: Researchers focus on short-term projects instead of developing and pursuing long-term agenda due to the lack of research culture.

Opportunities	Threats
Aligning research with national priorities: In many African countries, there is an opportunity to better align research with national education challenges, priorities, and government plans, as initiated in some countries, to ensure that research addresses critical local issues.	**Political influence and change of priorities**: Research agendas may be influenced by changing leadership or government priorities, leading to shifts in research focus that do not necessarily address long-term issues effectively.
Promoting local agendas: External donors and development partners, given their influence, have a real opportunity to promote the development, funding and implement government-led education research agendas.	**Influence of donors:** External partners and funders often hold considerable influence due to financial support, potentially driving research priorities away from local needs.
Funding relevant research: Where a coherent research agenda is in place, there are opportunities for decision-makers and external donors to fund relevant research and to translate research findings into actionable decisions.	**Limited resources to pursue agenda:** The limited availability of funds for education research can hinder the ability of public authorities to support research agendas.
Peer learning: Cross-country and cross-discipline learning emerge as peer learning opportunities about what works and what does not in the field of education research compared to other disciplines.	