



**SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE**  
CREATE MEANINGFUL CHANGE



ENHANCING  
**EDUCATION  
RESEARCH**  
IN AFRICA (EERA)



A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS  
ON THE STATE OF THE  
**EDUCATION RESEARCH  
FIELD IN AFRICA**

MARCH 2024



# About this document



Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA) and Southern Hemisphere prepared this report using data collected in sub-Saharan African countries. The figures reported are mainly from our desk research. In addition, the document uses data from key informant interviews and group discussions.

## Acknowledgements:

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**SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE**  
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# Executive Summary

“

Doing research in a particular area you need funds, but this is not forthcoming. This may hinder the sample size and once this is limited you may not generate the data that can be generalised to the larger population because you are confined to the size of sample to the size of your pocket.”

*(Researcher and University lecturer)*



Education research in Africa presents a small yet promising landscape characterised by the dedication of its actors' and rapid growth in research publications observed over the last two decades across most countries. **Africa's contribution to global education research is estimated to be around 2.13%, where more than 90% of the research was published after the year 2000. The field is dominated by a few specific countries, among others, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana.** Even in these countries, few institutions dominate the landscape in terms of knowledge production. Overall, researchers in Africa, face similar challenges in securing funding, conducting high-quality research, and lack opportunities for regional and international networking and

collaboration. However, in the field of education research, these challenges are much pronounced. For instance, **only 10% of African education research publications are funded, with partners outside providing up to 90% of the funding that does exist.**

These challenges and potential solutions were also highlighted in the 'Action on Funding for Africa-led Education Research' conference and the Forum for Education Research in/for/by Africa. Building on these events, the Enhancing Education Research in Africa (EERA) project aims to identify what is needed to create a vibrant and sustainable field of education research in Africa. This document reports on the situational analysis undertaken to ensure that

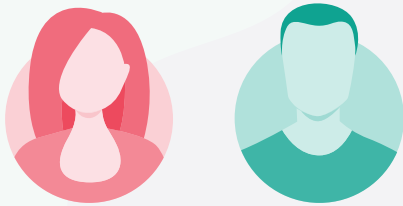
the proposals from the EERA project are grounded in the current reality of the field of education research in Africa and builds on what is already underway.

The analysis uses the field building framework to assess five main characteristics of the field of education research in Africa: Knowledge base, resources (funding), field-level agenda, actors and infrastructure. Data collected through key informant interviews, desk review, and group discussions reveals striking insights into the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) in the African education research ecosystem. Key elements of the SWOT analysis for the five characteristics are as follows:



- **Knowledge:** While growing research outputs aligned with emerging priorities are observed, serious resource constraints and limited funding affect the quality and quantity of most publications, leading to limited utility for decision-makers and impact.
- **Resources:** International organisations play a crucial role in funding education research on the continent. However, this heavy reliance on external funding, and therefore external agendas, often creates a gap between the research produced and the knowledge that decision-makers need.
- **Agenda:** Emerging initiatives of partnership between government and education researchers are giving birth to a shared vision about countries' education research priorities. However, this is the case only in few countries. Moreover, in contexts where such an alignment exists, the lack of funding remains a serious threat.
- **Actors:** Although they are diverse and committed, in most countries the field of education research seems fragmented, due to the lack of a shared vision and communication, insufficient collaboration among stakeholders and the absence of a strong research culture. Early career researchers and women face particular challenges (see box on gender disparities on next page).
- **Infrastructure:** Some education research networks, and thematic groups emerge across all the regions. Also, institutional repositories and dissemination platforms are actively raising the profile of Africa education research and researchers. Threats to these emerging elements of infrastructure include poorly curated dissemination and data sharing platforms, difficulties in accessing data, existing of low-quality and predatory journals, and inadequate institutional support.

# Gender disparities:



While a female-male gender ratio of

**25% - 75%**

is observed among academic staff in sub-Saharan Africa, huge disparities appear at country level for education researchers.

For instance, while Botswana has a

**48% - 52%**

gender ratio in the authorship of education research publications, a

**16% - 84%**

ratio is observed in Ethiopia.

Taking advantage of the strengths and opportunities identified in the education research landscape, we propose some action points to guide next steps of the EERA project. These include:

- Promoting education research not just for academic progression but to have a meaningful impact on local education policies and practices.
- Addressing the disconnect between researchers and decision-makers by promoting collaborations between education researchers and government agencies.
- Addressing the extremely limited (public) funding opportunities for education research.
- Encouraging donors and development partners to provide funding and support for government-led education research priorities, thus promoting local agendas.
- Promoting inclusion, gender equity, capacity building programmes and South-South peer learning networks.

Using this situational analysis as a foundation, ESSA and Southern Hemisphere will initiate a theory of change process. Initially, long-term outcomes will be developed by leveraging stakeholders' visions for the field of education research as well as their expectations for an enhanced landscape. Subsequently, building on lessons from this analysis, a process of Pathways of Change involving a steering committee and other education research stakeholders will be initiated to propose tailored interventions and projects to help enhance the field of education research on the continent.

You can stay up to date with the progress of the project, which runs until the end of 2024, [here](#) and sign up for updates and opportunities to engage [here](#).



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# Abbreviations

<b>AAU</b>	Association of African Universities
<b>AEAA</b>	Association for Educational Assessment in Africa
<b>AERD</b>	African Education Research Database
<b>AIRE</b>	Association of Education Researchers
<b>AJOL</b>	African Journals Online
<b>APHRC</b>	African Population and Health Research Center
<b>ARUA</b>	African Research University Alliance
<b>AUF</b>	Agence universitaire de la Francophonie
<b>BMGF</b>	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
<b>CARTA</b>	Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>ECRs</b>	Early Career Researchers
<b>EE4A</b>	Education Evidence 4 Action
<b>EERA</b>	Enhancing Education Research in Africa
<b>ESSA</b>	Education Sub Saharan Africa
<b>HEIs</b>	Higher Education Institutions
<b>ICERDA</b>	International Conference on Education Research for Development In Africa
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>IDRC</b>	International Development Research Centre
<b>IPA</b>	Innovations for Poverty Action
<b>JKUAT</b>	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
<b>KERD</b>	Kenya Education Research Database
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interviews
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisations
<b>NRF</b>	National Research Fund
<b>REAL</b>	Research for Equitable Access and Learning
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SSA</b>	Sub-Saharan Africa
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
<b>TET</b>	Tertiary Education Trust
<b>TOWS</b>	Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Strengths

# Introduction

Education research is instrumental in improving the quality of education systems. It is the most useful tool for assessing the spectrum of learning challenges, outcomes and impact of policy and practice from early childhood to adult education. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where around 70% of populations are under 30 years of age (United Nations, 2023), providing young people with inclusive and equitable quality education (Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4) has been among governments' priorities over the last two decades. Pursuing these development priorities has led to a rapid growth of education provision on the continent (see WDI, 2023). In this context and to ensure a quality educational system and evidence-based policy formulation and practices, there is an urgent need for data and research about all aspects and phases of education.

Rightly, researchers have identified the urgent needs for education research in Africa. A substantial body of research in education targeting Africa already exists and is growing. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that education research in Africa still encounters numerous persisting challenges:

- i. Compared to other regions, the field of education research in Africa is relatively immature, as observed in the recent assessments by Jung et al. (2017) and Zavale and Schneijderberg (2022);
- ii. African education researchers and research institutions face unique challenges in accessing funding, conducting quality research, attending networking events and conferences;
- iii. Education research led from Africa is difficult to access, under-represented and underused in academia and global education policy debates, as noted by Tikly (2019) and Mitchell et al. (2020).

These challenges, among others, motivate the EERA project, which seeks to explore the essential components required to build a sustainable education research system in Africa.

This document contributes to the EERA project by providing a situational

analysis of the field of education research in Africa using the field building framework developed by The Bridgespan Group. In doing so, our goal is to provide a holistic understanding of the landscape of education research by presenting an overview of the current field characteristics such as **Knowledge base, Resources, Field-level agenda, Actors, and Infrastructure**. Considering each of these five elements, we propose an assessment of their SWOT using data collected by means of a desk review, group discussions and key informant interviews (KIIs).

The remainder of the document is organised as follows: Section 2 discusses some methodological concerns, and presents the framework adopted and our data collection instruments; Section 3 reviews lessons learnt from existing literature organised by the five characteristics of the field building framework; Section 4, analyses data using the SWOT framework; finally, Section 5 presents the insights gained during the situational analysis and their implications for the rest of the project.

# Methodology

To identify what it takes to create a sustainable African education research system, it is crucial to gain an understanding of the status of the field of education research on the continent. To do so, we are using a field building framework to underpin the research design. This section provides a brief overview of the latter framework in addition to data collection procedures.

## 2.1. An overview of the field building framework

A field is a community of individuals and organisations working to address common problems (Farnham et al., 2020). Hence, 'field building' refers to activities that unlock a field's progress toward greater impact at scale. For this project, our focus revolves around

developing, aligning, and expanding the work of African researchers to increase outputs and outcomes in the field of education research. The literature on field building describes a field using five characteristics, the evolution of each of these is analysed

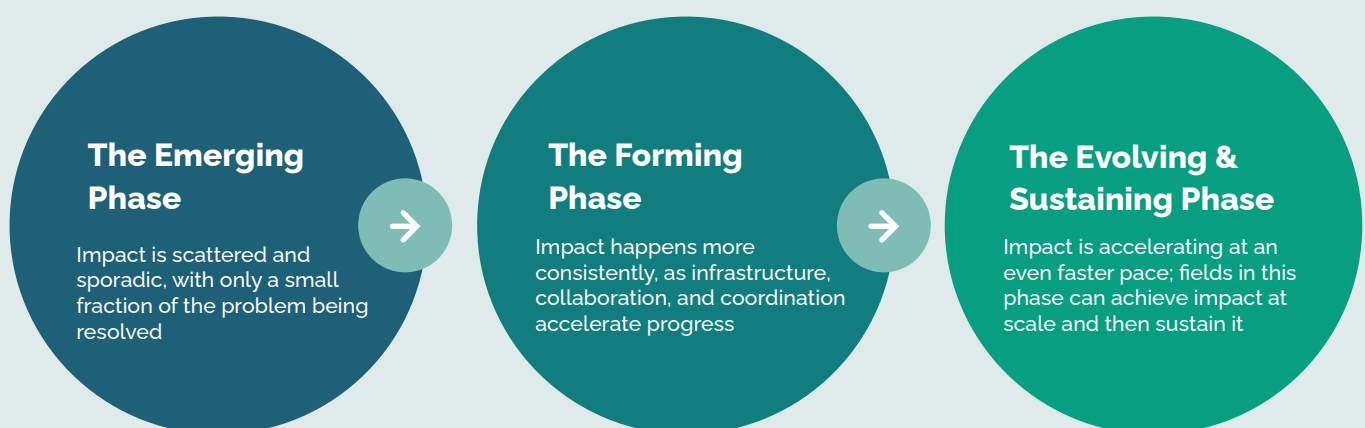
through three (sometimes four) distinct phases. Hereafter, a brief description of the five elements of the field building framework is presented, followed by the different phases of a field's evolution.

Characteristics	Definition
<b>Knowledge base</b>	An evolving body of research that helps better understand the magnitude of the issues at hand. In the context of this situational analysis, it offers an overview of the state of education research on the continent, highlighting its opportunities and challenges.
<b>Actors</b>	Actors are Individuals and organisations that together help the field develop the shared identity and vision that are required to achieve impact at scale.
<b>Field-level agenda</b>	The most critical approaches that field actors will pursue to develop solutions. For this situational analysis centered on the field of education research, we focus on research agenda or priorities that steer the efforts of African education researchers.
<b>Resources</b>	Financial capital or non-financial support that support the organisations to be most effective. In the context of this situational analysis, our approach has mainly focused on financial support, relegating the case of non-financial resources to infrastructure.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Infrastructure is the "connective tissue" that strengthens each of the other four field characteristics as well as the complementarity between them, enhancing the efforts of actors in the field by making them more coordinated, connected, and effective.

**Table 1.** The five characteristics of the field building framework

**Source:** The Bridgespan Group. (2020). *Field Building for Population Level Change*.

**Notes:** In this analysis, we contextualise the definition of "Field-level agenda" and "Infrastructure".



**Figure 1.** Evolution of a field

**Source:** The Bridgespan Group. (2020).

## 2.2. An overview of the SWOT framework

The SWOT analysis is a framework that helps identify an organisation's strengths and weaknesses (S-W), as well as its opportunities and threats (O-T) ([Community Tool Box](#)). Its strength remains in its simplicity and application to a variety of topics.

In the context of this situational analysis, we adopt a SWOT analysis along with the field building framework. Concretely, aiming to offer a full picture of the field of education research in Africa, we propose to apply a SWOT analysis to each of the five characteristics presented in Table 1.

Positives		Negatives	
Internal	<b>Strengths:</b> What the system does well? What activities or processes have succeeded?	Weaknesses:	What could be improved in the system in terms of physical resources, funding?
External	<b>Opportunities:</b> What possibilities exist to support and strengthen the system?	Threats:	What obstacles does the system face that hinder the efforts of actors?

**Table 2.** A basic overview of the SWOT framework

We are aware that the SWOT framework is mostly used at the organisation level. Nevertheless, due to its simplicity and strengths, its applications have gone beyond the micro-level of the organisation to cover entire industry assessments ([Nikolaou and Evangelinos, 2010](#); [Yovchev, 2020](#)) and country

level analyses ([ERDF, 2018](#); [Ghazinoory and Ghazinoori, 2006](#)). Hence, by combining the SWOT and the field building frameworks, we intend to consider various layers of the education research landscape and propose an in-depth assessment of each of these layers.

## 2.3. Search protocol for literature review

To conduct the SWOT analysis, we collect data about the five characteristics of the field building framework through a review of the literature and KIs. Regarding the literature review, we searched for both grey literature and academic publications using search engines and databases such as "Google", "Scholar Google" and "Scopus". In doing so, our search items can be summarised as: "Education research" AND "Africa" AND "Characteristics considered."

It is important to highlight that our focus has been directed towards recent systematic review papers that examine the education research ecosystem, either at the continental level or considering groups of countries. We adopted this procedure because individual investigations addressing specific research questions are less effective in portraying the knowledge base and the field compared to review papers.

## 2.4. Data collection instruments and group discussions

**Interviews:** We structured the qualitative instruments to capture good practices, challenges and opportunities identified by interviewees about each of the five characteristics listed above. The document in Annex 1 reports the interview questions, where the specific objectives of each set of questions are stated. Table 3 sets out the diverse groups of stakeholders targeted in the KIs. It is to note that our sampling method reflects the different stakeholder groups as mentioned in the proposal. The number of interviews, however, is based on a non-probabilistic approach. In doing so, we prioritise stakeholders' diversity and limit the sample size to 20. Informants were identified through a 'snowballing' approach, starting with the networks of the Steering Committee, funders, ESSA and Southern Hemisphere.

Stakeholder category	Count
Education researchers (early career, mid and senior researchers)	8
Leaders of education and research institutions	4
Users of education research	4
Stakeholders from other disciplines	4
<b>Total number of stakeholders</b>	<b>20</b>

**Table 3.** Sampling for KIs

**Group discussions:** Besides the KIs with selected stakeholders, we also participated in different education research events on the continent in 2023, including the [COREVIP \(AAU\)](#), from 4 to 7 July, the [ICERDA 2023 Conference](#), from 19 to 21 September, the [2023 ARUA Conference](#), from 15 to 17 November, and the [2023 EE4A Conference](#), from 29 to 30 November. We took advantage of our participation in these events to organise open sessions where group discussions were conducted to collect data on critical elements mentioned in the instruments of the KIs (see Annex 3). These conferences were identified as the most prominent conferences for education researchers in Africa during the period of data collection (July-December 2023).





# Desk research

This section reviews existing literature on education research in Africa, aligned with the field building framework. Initially, our emphasis is on the knowledge base as it helps to set the scene and encompasses various facets that are worth consideration. Beyond consideration of the knowledge base, it answers the following questions related to the field of education research in Africa: *How do funding and resource availability (or lack thereof) affect the field? What are the agenda and infrastructure in the field? Who are the key actors and their roles in the field of education research?* This section draws heavily on analysis of the African Education Research Database (AERD) due to the ability of the authors to access its metadata. This is not intended to detract from the other databases and repositories that exist on the continent (see section 3.5 for an overview of these).

## Language divide:

While academic databases such as Scopus and Web of Science are primarily used for review articles, they disregard research published in French, Portuguese and Spanish. This may also affect this desk research, where we specifically exploit review papers and metadata from the AERD.

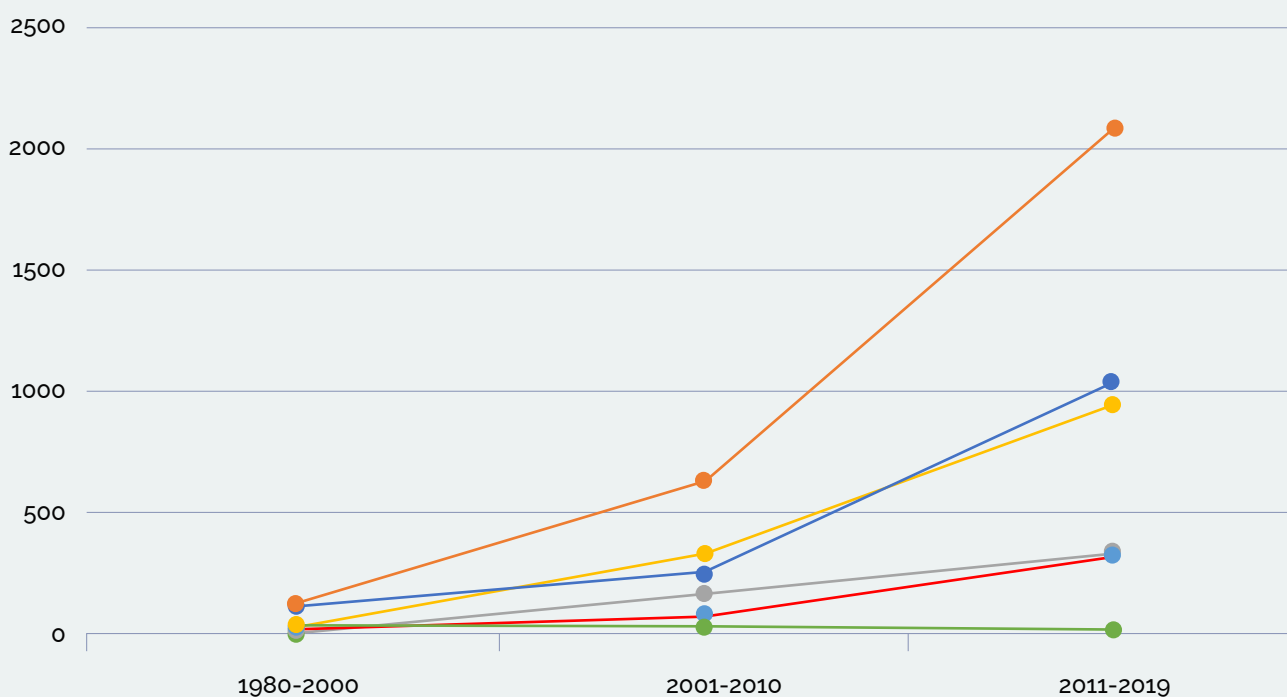


## 3.1. Knowledge base in the field of education research

### 3.1.1. Evolution of the field of education research

Africa's contribution to global research is relatively modest in contrast to other regions, estimated to be around 2 to 3% (World Economic Forum, 2017; Kana et al., 2021). Considering education research, Africa made considerable progress over the years (see Figure 2). A recent analysis of 18,523 ISI-indexed journal articles in the field of education indicates that Africa represents 2.13% of the author's pool (Wolhuter, 2019). Moreover, data shows that education

research is a relatively recent phenomenon on the continent. Out of 6,483 research outputs published between 1980 and 2019, 95% have been published between 2001 and 2019 (Zavale and Schneijdrberg, 2022). Figure 2 illustrates the growth in one sub-field in education, showing that African research focusing on higher education is published in both specialised and non-specialised journals.



**Figure 2.** African higher education research publications by type of journals

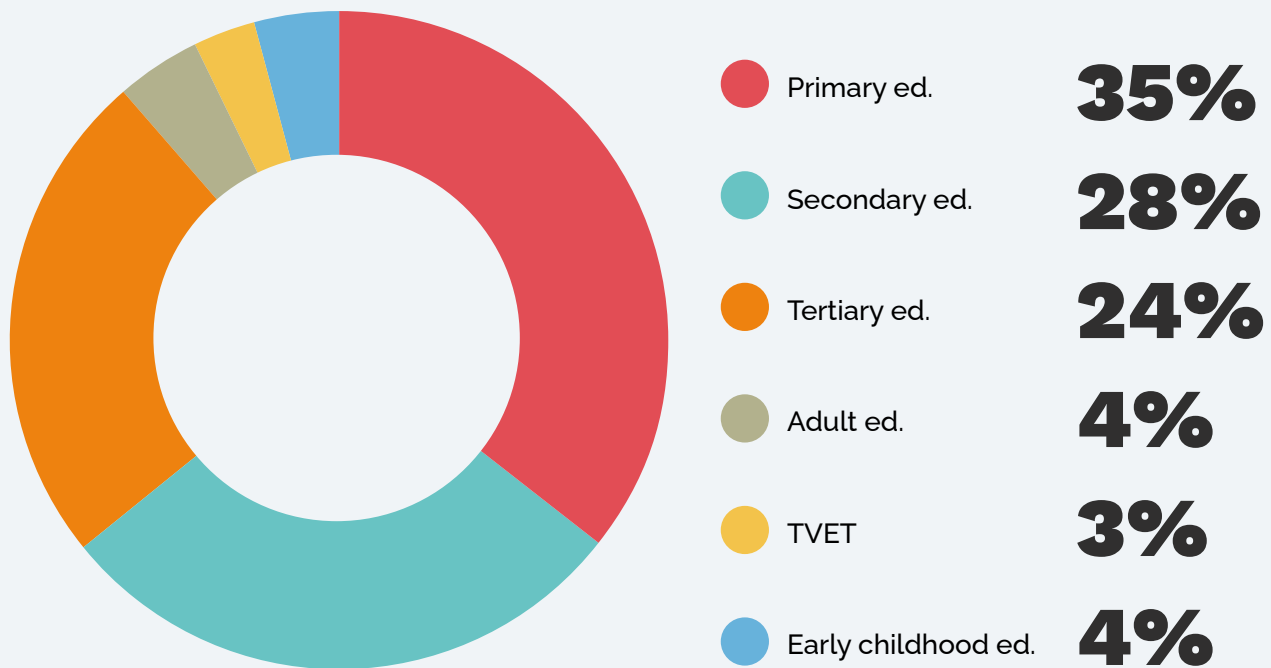
- Articles in specialized HE indexed journals
- Articles in non-specialized indexed journals
- Articles in specialized HE non-indexed journals
- Articles in non-specialized non-indexed journals
- Books/book chapters in indexed publishers
- Books/book chapters in non-indexed publishers

**Source:** The authors using data from Zavale and Schneijdrberg (2022)

### 3.1.2. The state of education research and focus areas

Recent landscape mappings reveal that African scholars consider all levels of education and address a wide range of topics. For instance, in their assessment of education research publications by sub-Saharan Africa-based researchers, [Rose et al., 2019](#) found that 35, 28 and 24% of all 1,650 education research publications identified, focus on primary, secondary and tertiary education, respectively.

Adult education (4%), TVET and early childhood education are under-represented in the field of education research (see [Rose et al., 2019](#)). Comparable figures can be identified in the study by [Mitchell et al. \(2020\)](#), where the authors proposed a large-scale bibliometric assessment of 3,067 African education research publications.



**Figure 3.** Education research publications by phase of education

Regarding focus areas (or thematic classifications) of the African education research, several categories have been proposed, but with no apparent consensus among authors (e.g., [Teichler, 2015](#); [Tight, 2012](#)). In fact, the field of education research in Africa is multi-thematic, and a proper classification probably depends on the phase of education considered and research priorities. For instance, while

[Zavale and Schneijderberg \(2022\)](#) classify African education research into 18 thematic areas, [Mitchell et al. \(2020\)](#), in the same vein as [Rose et al. \(2019\)](#), consider eight thematic areas, which seem relatively tractable and will be used below to describe the thematic distribution of the African education research landscape.

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that [Zavale and Schneijderberg \(2022\)](#) targeted African HE research, understood as any kind of research targeting any phenomenon of African HE, published through conventional scientific venues.

### 3.1.3. Distribution analysis of thematic areas

The eight thematic areas considered by [Mitchell et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Rose et al. \(2019\)](#) include i) Language and curriculum; ii) Teachers and teaching; iii) Equitable and inclusive education; iv) Policy and financing; v) Institutional leadership, culture, and facilities; vi) Access to education; vii) Students, learning and assessment; and viii) Information and communications technology (ICT). Each of these thematic areas has various sub-themes and can be analysed through several lenses, including phases of education, representativeness (of sub-themes), as well as evolution over time.

To propose an up to date insight into the contribution of each of these thematic areas, we use data from the African Education Research Database (AERD), which is a collection of publications by Africa-based scholars. Table 4 lists the thematic areas, their sub-themes, and the relative representativeness of the latter. Subsequently, we propose a brief review of the four most studied thematic areas.



#### Language and curriculum:

This has been widely studied by African researchers. In this domain, over 80% of available research discusses learning, competencies, and skills as well as instruction language. Among others, researchers highlight the role of language, arguing that language is one of the explanations of the persistent differential achievement in learning outcomes, namely intellectual skills, cognitive skills' development, and knowledge sharing ([Reddy et al., 2015](#); [Msimanga et al. 2017](#)). Regarding curriculum, its importance to teaching and learning is widely known. However, in the presence of conflicts, underfunding, and implementation gaps, the entire system may fail, preventing students from progressing ([Chisholm and Leyendecker, 2008](#); [Rwantabagu, 2010](#); [Tadesse and Melese, 2016](#)).



#### Teachers and teaching:

A large body of research also discusses challenges in teacher education ([Colley, 2014](#)), preparation ([Akyeampong et al., 2013](#)), absenteeism ([Bennell, 2022](#)), pay ([Evans et al., 2022](#); [Bennell, 2023](#)) and teaching role ([Routley, 2016](#); [Shawa, 2020](#)) in the African context. Although multi-faceted and covering many sub-topics of interest, the literature on teachers and teaching in Africa is consistent with global patterns about the growing implementation of learner-centred pedagogies that create spaces for learners to interact with their peers as well as teachers ([Rose et al., 2019](#)). Also, this literature explores the effect on teaching or instructional practices of teacher training and professional development ([Pryor et al., 2012](#); [Okiror et al., 2014](#)), translanguaging and multilingualism ([Makalela, 2017](#); [Mokala, 2022](#)) and gender and religion ([Helander, 2006](#)).





**Table 4.** Thematic areas in the field of education research

**Notes:** Thematic areas from the most current data in the AERD (assessed on 09.08.2023) following the classification by *Rose et al. (2019)*. Some items fit under more than one thematic area. See Annex 2

In addition to the thematic areas and corresponding subthemes, Annex 2 highlights existing heterogeneities in the themes covered by African education researchers from the perspective of countries and phases of education.

<sup>2</sup> It is to observe that the AERD records only (indexed-) journal publications. Hence, reports and articles published in local and non-indexed journals are not included in this classification. Furthermore the AERD does not currently include publications from South Africa. At the point of analysis the AERD contained 5,336 publications.



## Institutional leadership, culture, and facilities:

Institutional factors are among the top three thematic areas investigated by African researchers and include leadership and management at the school system level, institutional culture, and facilities. Like in other geographies, researchers, among others, [Quarshie and Oyedele \(2011\)](#), [Wills \(2016\)](#), and [Brion and Cordeiro \(2018\)](#) link education leadership, management, as well as instructional supervision to improved school performance and implementation of curriculum in the African context. As noted by [Rose et al. \(2019\)](#), while African education researchers largely investigate the impact of educational leadership and leadership styles ([Atsebeha, 2016](#); [Sobia et al., 2021](#); [Mhlanga, 2022](#)), very few papers can be identified on the female school leaders and gender equality in educational leadership ([Faulkner, 2015](#)). Finally, based on a recent systematic review on the topic in West Africa, school leadership is identified as the second most significant factor impacting school and student outcomes, encompassing literacy and numeracy levels, and advancement to secondary and higher education. ([Bush and Glover, 2016](#)).



## Equitable and inclusive education:

This thematic area is the fourth most researched area among the 5,336 [AERD](#) publications reviewed. Circa 80% of publications in this thematic area address poverty, gender, and disability. Among others, researchers investigate the role of poverty and related factors such as hunger, stigma, and exclusion on access to education and learning outcomes ([Kamada et al., 2016](#); [Koech, 2021](#); [Ngepah et al., 2023](#)). In addition, researchers also report about the impact of pro-poor ([Lewin and Sabates, 2012](#)), cash transfers ([Sher et al., 2021](#)), free or low-tuition-fee policies ([Heyneman and Stern, 2014](#); [Vander Ark, 2018](#)) on equitable and inclusive access to education in sub-Saharan Africa. Regarding disability, evidence suggests that stigmatisation may also lead to inequitable access to education ([Banks et al., 2022](#); [Samia et al., 2022](#)). Gender inequality and girl education in Africa are being increasingly addressed in the literature (see e.g., [Abbott et al., 2015](#); [Robert and Schöer, 2021](#); [Muhanguzi 2021](#)). However, countries like Chad and Niger exhibit a limited number of education research on the topic ([Rose et al., 2019](#)).

Finally, the four remaining thematic areas, **Policy and financing, Access to education, Students, learning and assessment and information and communications technology** are also addressed in the literature to varying degrees. The figures reported in Table 4, when examined at a more disaggregated level, show some noticeable knowledge gaps. These include, among others, discussions about the suitability of textbooks, which is also reflected in available research on curriculum and its relevance; ethnicity, and conflict which is linked to human rights violations since it is a major barrier to equitable participation in education; student perspective about quality, needs and usefulness of their training and education; and women or gender inequality in educational leadership.

## Key point summary:

- African research on education represents 2.13% of the author's pool from ISI-indexed journal articles.
- The field of education research is showing growth, with 95% of these publications having been published between 2001 and 2019.
- The four most researched topics are Language and curriculum, Teachers and teaching, and Institutional leadership culture and facilities, and Equitable and inclusive education.
- The areas with a weaker knowledge base are Policy and financing, Access to education, Students learning and assessment, and Information and Communication Technologies.

## 3.2. Funding and non-financial support

This sub-section discusses the sources of education research funding, their distribution and the challenges faced by researchers in the field of education to access funding.

### Sources and Distribution of Funding:

Funding is a crucial component of education research, as it enables the development and implementation of programmes and initiatives that can improve the quality of education. Unfortunately, in the African context, a funding gap persists, and this is more pronounced in the field of education research. Recent data collected by On Think Tank about funding for education research in Africa bears this out. The data indicates that although African grantees receive 45% of the number of education research grants, they actually only received 19% of the total funding. Conversely, North American grantees are awarded 38% of the grants but received a staggering 81% of the total research funding (Mendizabal, 2023).

Evidence from the African Education Research Database (AERD) indicates that only about 10% of African education research studies receive funding (ESSA and REAL Centre, 2021). This implies that close to 90% of published studies in education receive little to no funding. Among the studies funded, evidence indicates that up to 90% are funded by external agencies, namely bilateral and multilateral bodies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), foundations, and others (Teferra and Altbachl, 2004). Table 5 reports the top 14 funders of education research in Africa, classified into two distinct categories, where it is observed that funding from national governments is minor, as also reported by Gévaudan (2017).

Our assessment of the AERD, ESSA and REAL Centre (2021), also revealed that some phases of education have been prioritised by funders. For instance, most research funding in the field of education in Africa is devoted to Primary Education. Other areas such as Early Childhood Education, Secondary Education, Tertiary Education, and Vocational Education receive comparatively less attention from funders.

### → Inter/governmental institution



### → Foundation/charity



Top funders of education research in Africa

**Notes:** Source of education research funding in Africa (ESSA and REAL Centre, 2021). This AERD-based classification mostly includes research papers, books and book chapters. This list includes Institutions and Foundation most frequently listed by education researchers in their publication as funders of their works.

## Challenges and Barriers:

Funding for research is extremely low across all disciplines in Africa, particularly in the field of education. The most striking barriers and challenges identified in the work, among others, by [Collins and Farrar \(2014\)](#), [Rose et al. \(2019\)](#) and [ESSA and REAL Centre \(2021\)](#) can be summarised as follows:

- Policymakers have little trust (or understanding) in the use of research to inform policy, thus providing low investment in research. Potential explanatory factors may be the very limited education budget and lack of relevance of evidence generated during policy dialogues.
- Research funding from industry is low, with some disciplines such as social sciences not receiving any funding.
- Funders of education research attach many conditions to the funding opportunities, making it difficult for African universities to qualify.
- The involvement of local researchers is limited by consultancy agencies with roots in developed countries, who have the largest network and dominate the space.
- The staff capacity of most African universities is low, thus limiting the ability to develop grant-winning proposals to secure funding for research projects.
- Some international research organisations and donors do not trust the quality of research produced by African researchers, leading to poor support.

## Non-Financial Resources and Capacity Building:

In addition to the critical role of funding, non-financial forms of support also hold substantial importance in the field of education research. While research into this aspect has not been exhaustive, recent engagements with stakeholders yielded noteworthy insights that deserve attention. For instance, early career researchers require increased access to training, mentorship, infrastructure, and support to cultivate essential research skills, such as grant writing and project management. Additionally, fostering opportunities for collaboration with seasoned researchers both within the continent and internationally is vital for their career progression ([ESSA and REAL Centre, 2021](#)).

Overall, accessing public and private funding to conduct context-relevant research is one of the major barriers widely faced by African researchers, including those in the field of education research.



## Key point summary:

- Only about 10% of African education research studies receive funding. Among the studies funded, evidence indicates that up to 90% are funded by external agencies, namely bilateral and multilateral bodies, NGOs, foundations, and others.
- Most research funding in the field of education in Africa is devoted to Primary Education.
- Funders of education research attach many conditions to the funding opportunities, making it difficult for African universities to satisfy these conditions.
- Some international research organisations and donors do not trust the quality of research produced by African researchers, leading to poor support.

### 3.3. Field-level research agenda

On its importance in education research, Santos and Horta (2018) argue that a research agenda is central to knowledge creation, as it marks the initial phase of a journey that encompasses the interests of individual researchers and the needs of their affiliated communities. In the context of SSA, the research agenda and its importance to the field of education research have been the subject of very few contributions. The sole paper we identified advocating for a research agenda within the field of education is the work by Ebersöhn (2016). The latter author argued that a collective endeavour (an agenda) could culminate into a robust knowledge base for local implementation, especially in poor and less equal settings.

Researchers, on the one hand, have examined the driving forces

and rationales behind the research priorities in the field of education research in Africa. This is exemplified by the works of Teferra and Altbachl (2004), Bradley (2017) and Rose et al. (2019), to cite a few. On the other hand, researchers have explored how coloniality and external factors drive research agendas in Africa (Heleta, 2016; Cloete et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2020). Regarding the latter aspect, it is argued that North-South relations (also in social sciences) have a direct impact on the curricula, research priorities, and agendas pursued by education researchers in Africa. This phenomenon is underscored by the bibliometric analysis conducted by Tumwebaze (2022), which illustrates that research undertaken and published by African scholars has little alignment with the development agenda of the Africa Development Bank Group. Finally, in cases where

research is funded, the resulting research outputs are less likely to reflect local priorities due to the significant reliance on international donors (Botton and d'Aiglepiere, 2020). This also applies to education research and can be identified in the education research landscape analysis by Teferra and Altbachl (2004) and Rose et al. (2019).

Overall, it is to mention that analyses targeting education research priorities or agendas pursued by African education researchers and the factors driving that are scarce, representing a substantial knowledge gap from a research perspective. From the decision-makers' perspective, this calls for efforts to identify and disseminate local needs in terms of research for improving the quality of the educational system.

#### Key point summary:

- Coloniality and North-South relations have a direct impact on the curricula, research priorities, and agendas pursued by education researchers in Africa.
- Research undertaken and published by African scholars has little alignment with the development agenda of the Africa Development Bank Group.
- Studies targeting education research priorities in Africa and their driving forces are scarce, representing a substantial knowledge gap.





### 3.4. Key actors and their Role in Education Research

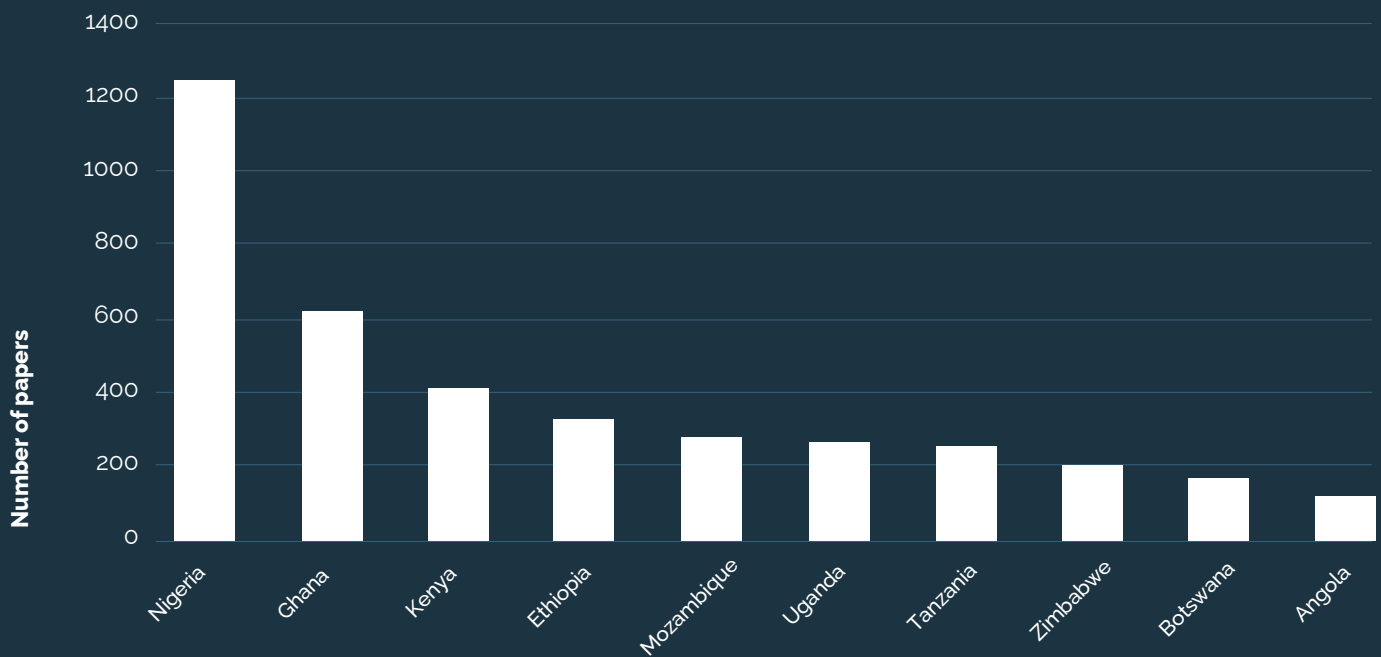
Co-creation is increasingly gaining prominence in social sciences, also in education research, where [Clidoro et al. \(2023\)](#) advocate that involving stakeholders such as civil society, decision-makers, school-level actors, and development partners in the research journey since co-ownership of research outputs ensures their large diffusion and use. The co-creation argument also underscores the importance of academic and non-academic actors (both individuals and institutions) to

the field of education research, as observed by [Asiyai \(2015\)](#) and [Mitchell \(2018\)](#). This sub-section discusses the role of researchers, funders and decision-makers, among others, in the education research landscape.

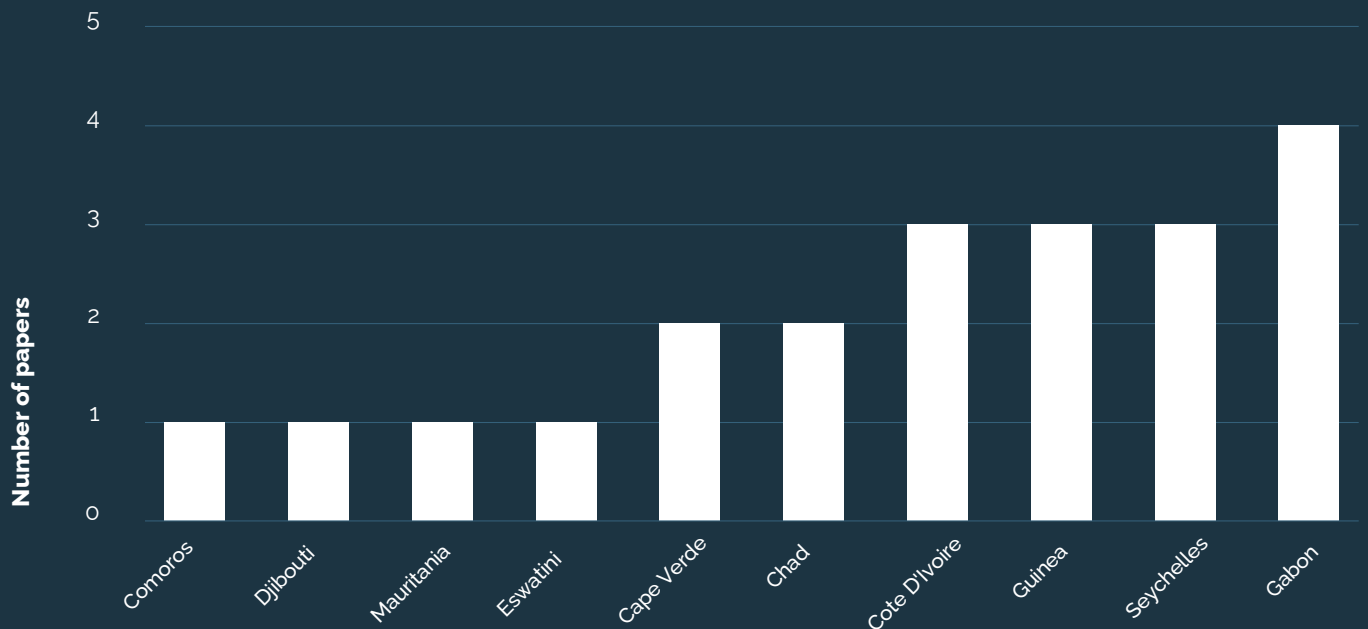
**Academics and researchers:** They design and execute education research, analyse data, and publish research findings. Education researchers play a crucial role in the research journey, and their significance to the field is indisputable since they

are the one conducting research and generating knowledge to improve education practices and policies ([Cloete et al. 2018](#)). Considering the number of publications as indicator of the population of education researchers in sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 3), it appears that most education researchers are identified in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, while the lowest concentration is observed in the Comoros, Djibouti and Mauritania.

## The 10 countries with most education researchers in SSA



## The 10 countries with fewest education researchers in SSA



**Figure 4.** Distribution of education researchers in sub-Saharan Africa

**Note:** The AERD excludes South Africa. Also, as we mainly use Scopus and Web of Science, the data may suffer from a language bias. The numbers of papers and book identified serve as an indicator for the population of education researchers.

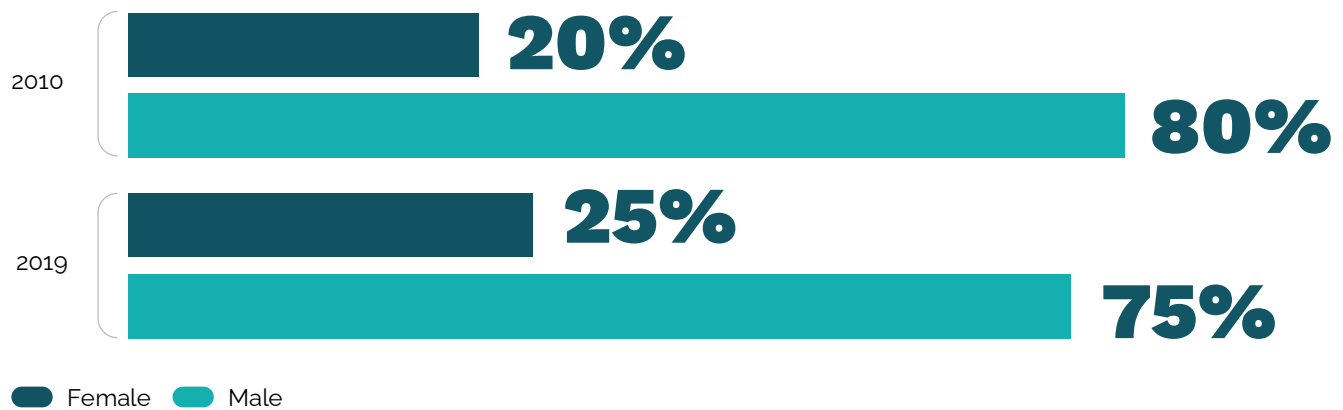
**Source:** The authors based on the AERD Data of 5,336 publications.

Regarding **Gender Differences** in the field of education research, it is worth primarily noting that women are under-represented both in terms of enrolment in tertiary education (WDI, 2021) and in the academic staff within tertiary education institutions in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2023). For example, data indicates a female representation of 25% between 2016 and 2019 in the academic staff in sub-Saharan Africa, which is a

significant increase from 20% recorded in 2010. This under-representation may also be mirrored in the contribution of female education researchers to the field. This has been assessed by Rose et al. (2019) who analysed the gender distribution of 1,711 researchers from the AERD. Their results indicate that on average 29% of Africa-based education researchers are female, with varying distribution at the country level. For instance, while Botswana

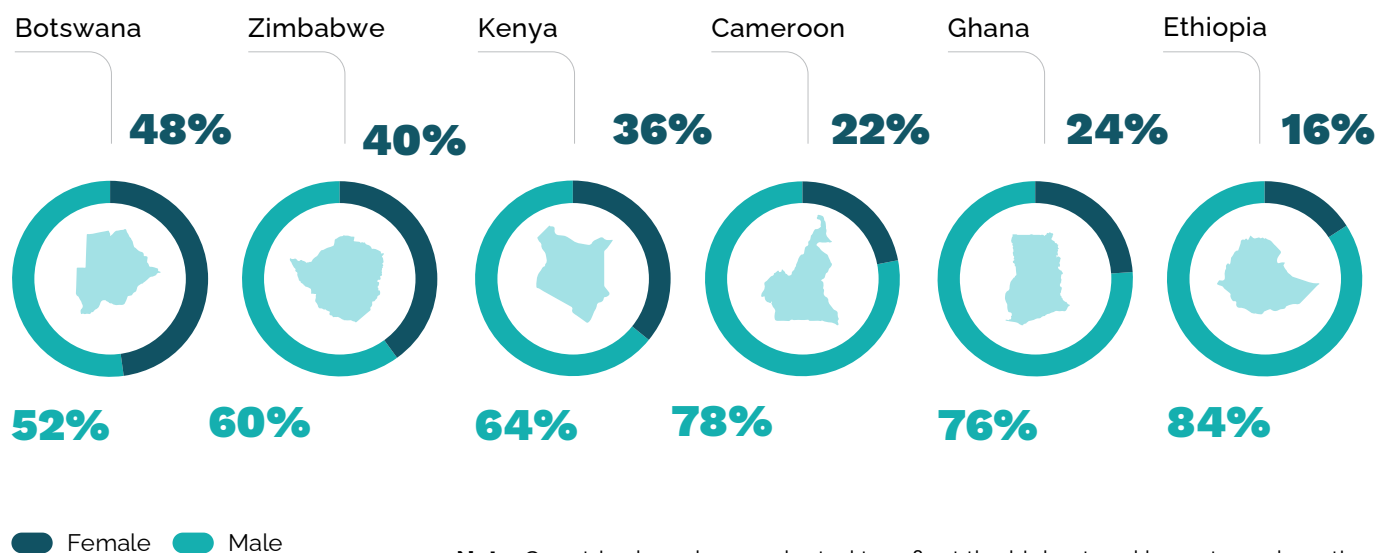
and Zimbabwe show shares of female researchers of 48% and 40% respectively, Ghana and Ethiopia have the lowest percentage of female researchers, 24% and 16%, respectively. Similar observations of female researchers' relative low research outputs are echoed in the work by Kalele (2021) and Yallew and Dipitso (2022) for early career researchers.

### Academic staff in Africa: Male vs Female in %



**Figure 5.** Authorship of education research by gender

### Authorship by gender in selected countries based on the AERD



**Note:** Countries have been selected to reflect the highest and lowest gender ratios.

The situation of **Early Career Researchers (ECRs) in Africa** has been largely examined from a multidisciplinary perspective (Harle, 2011; Kalele, 2021, Mgaiwa and Kapinga, 2021) and less within the field of education research. The two papers we identified in the field of education research are the works by (Yallew and Dipitso (2022) and Young (2022). While Yallew and Dipitso (2022), based on case studies in Mozambique, Ethiopia and South Africa, show that early career researchers in Africa face particularly serious challenges to conduct education research, Young (2022) highlights the advantages of research collaboration for African universities as well as the challenges

facing early career researchers in African universities. Besides these, country case studies in Ghana (Goski and Munkaila, 2016), Uganda (Ssempebwa et al., 2016) and (Udegbe, 2016), among others, discussed early career researchers' induction and integration into teaching. Although there is limited data and cross-country comparative assessments concerning early career researchers in the field of education research, Harle (2011) identified some areas where support is crucial for young researchers. These also apply to African early career education researchers. Among others, African early career researchers need:

- Opportunities to stay connected to their peers, locally, regionally and internationally, through networks and conferences, and through participating in their respective research communities.
- Guidance and support to enable the development of PhD work into publishable form and secure their first peer reviewed articles.
- Time and assistance to define a research agenda, design new projects, and secure funding to enable it.



Besides researchers, decision-makers, educators and students, and funding agencies, also play a significant role in the education research landscape. However, research papers analysing their situation in Africa or proposing a comparative perspective across countries are scarce. Hereafter, a brief description of the role of some of these actors in the field of education research.

# The voice of

# education ECRs

## Group discussions with ECRs reveal the following themes:

**Inadequate guidance and mentorship:** To gain skills and produce high-quality research, ECRs primarily need mentoring and guidance. The latter may not always be guaranteed as ECRs massively report a “**lack of clear guidance**”, “**two supervisors who disagree**”, “**supervisors come from different universities with different methodologies**”, “**strikes from university lecturers**” and “**discriminatory tendencies to access resources**” among challenges they faced during their training. These challenges, as reported by ECRs, affect not only the quality of the research outputs but also the duration of the PhD training and no one (the mentor) is blamed for it except the doctoral students themselves. These also motivate ECRs to “**commission out elements of PhD writing to others.**”

**Lack of funding and support to conduct research:** When questioned about their career aspirations post-PhD, most ECRs expressed their desire to “**carry on with research**”, engage in teaching, and transition into roles where impactful decisions are made. Unfortunately, the lack of funding and support to conduct quality research has been identified as a serious challenge to realise these career aspirations. Specifically, ECRs share perspectives such as “**lack of support to develop research capacity**”, “**lack of funding to conduct research**” and that “**everyone in the room is self-sponsored.**”

In addition, the inadequate support and resources to “**get researchers in the field**”, “**cover the time and travel**”, “**for data collection**”, “**conferences**”, and “**dissemination and publication.**” These challenges do not make it possible to develop research capacities and strengthen the education research base in African universities and institutions, nor to train successive generations.

**Limited networking and collaboration:** Various evidence indicates that contemporary research is increasingly collaborative, involving South-South and North-South actors. The primary data suggests that this is also very important for ECRs as it represents opportunities to discuss research interests and finding partners for future collaborations. Precisely, during the group discussions, ECRs reveal the “**lack of networking opportunities**”, “**lack of funding to attend conferences**”, and some even concede that “this is the first time I am meeting my colleagues.”

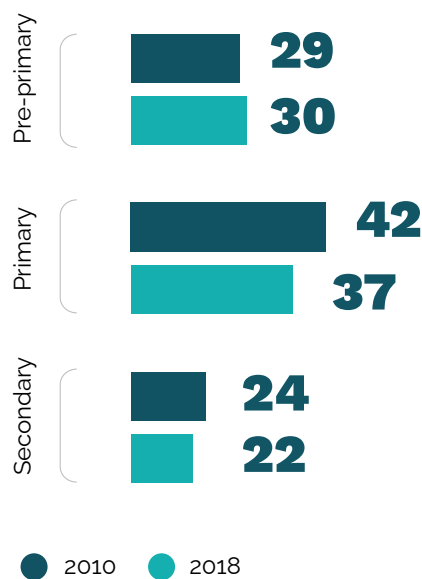
**Solutions suggested:** Our discussions have also touched on suggestions to ease the training process for young researchers. Three main solutions emerged from ECRs: “**Training is needed for supervisors. Definitely a lack of qualified personnel**”, “**Integrate values at an early stage**” and as far as education is concerned, there is a need for a “**Centre of excellence for research.**”

**Decision-makers:** Government entities at various levels, including local, regional, and national, as well as non-governmental bodies, rely on evidence about access to education, curriculum, and educational standards to shape educational policies at country, regional or institution levels. This has been highlighted by researchers such as Mitchell (2018) and Clidoro et al. (2023), who argue that decision-makers are among the most vital change agents to be involved in research activities since they play key roles in translating evidence into policy and practice. Moreover, the involvement of these decision-makers is crucial for increasing the impact of evidence generated from research Mitchell (2018).

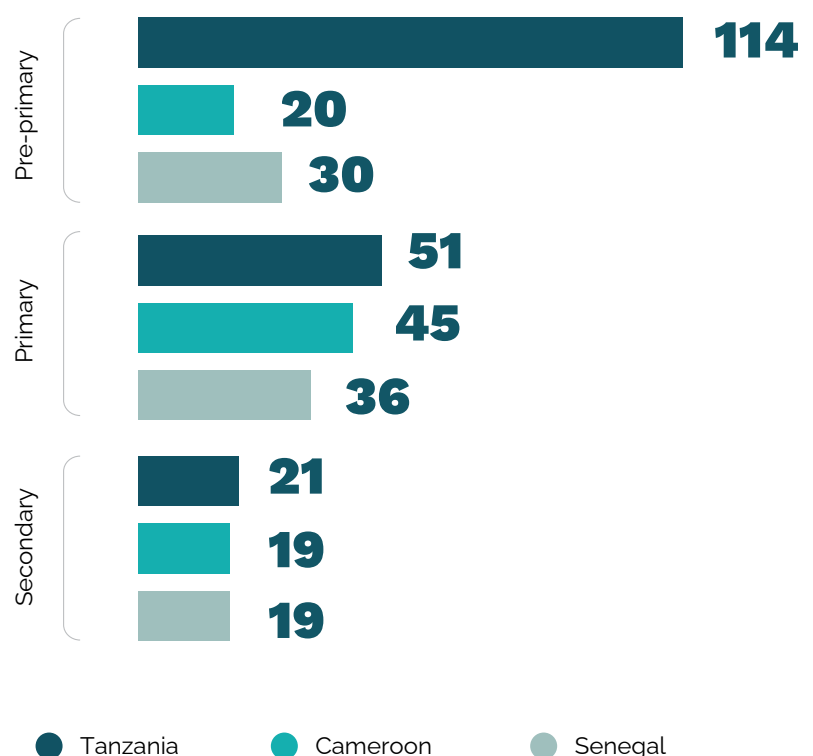
**Teachers and Students:** Students are the subjects of educational research and the beneficiaries of its outcomes. Their participation in research contributes to the advancement of knowledge and the improvement of educational practices. Among others, they often provide feedback on educational programmes, interventions, or teaching methods to improve academic systems and inform the direction of research (Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003). **Teachers or educators** are trainers and educators, who also use research findings to inform their teaching practices. They are mostly interested and participate in research on pedagogy, classroom management, and effective teaching strategies (Stanovich & Stanovich 2003). Although teachers and students' contributions to education research in Africa has been less investigated, existing data helps appreciate pupil-teacher ratio in sub-Saharan Africa (WDI, 2023).

At the tertiary level, the recent Demographic of African Faculty Project (see AAU, ESSA and PRB, 2020), initially piloted in Ghana and implemented in the East African Community, has provided fresh evidence of faculty shortages in African higher education institutions, this is particularly pronounced in the field of education. The resulting high teaching loads leave members of education faculties with little time to undertake research.

### Pupil-Teacher ratio in SSA



### Pupil-teacher ratio in selected SSA countries



**Figure 6.** Pupil-teacher ratio in sub-Saharan Africa

**Note:** This graph has been developed using WDI data, which report figures from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics



**Funding Agencies:** They provide grants and funding for education research. Existing estimates indicate that across all disciplines 'external support for research in Africa range from 70 percent to as much as 90 percent' (Teferra and Altbachl, 2004). The latter observation highlights the role of private and international funding agencies in the field of education research in Africa. Although

researchers argue that funding agencies also dictate the agendas and research priorities, their contribution to the field remains crucial, as observed by Atuahene (2011) and Gévaudan (2017).

In conclusion, actors such as **Civil Societies, NGOs** and **Employers**, among others, conduct or fund education research on the continent.

Additionally, as noted by Mundy et al. (2010) and Mitchell (2018), these organisations have a growing voice in government policy formulation and are active partners in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of national education-sector plans. However, data to assess the research contribution of individual actors to the field is hardly available, which represents a knowledge gap.

## Key point summary:

- Existing research underlines the importance of academic and non-academic actors (both individuals and institutions) to the field of education research.
- Gender discrepancies persists in the education research landscape both in terms of demographics and research outputs.
- Although very limited in the field of education research, existing studies discuss challenges African early career researchers face and some of their needs to improve their research and teaching skills.

# Women in the field of education research

Female education researchers, notably female early career researchers, face multi-faceted challenges that extend beyond academic pursuits. Our group discussions with female education ECRs working in the African university context support this since balancing family responsibilities emerges as a prominent issue for female academics: *"[...] we have even less time. Family must come first."*

The data also reveals that *"sexual harassment"* emanating from men colleagues affects *"female students and faculty at all levels."* This likely creates a hostile environment for female researchers, especially ECRs. Moreover, the pronounced gender imbalance within the departments *"affects the whole culture of the department"*, perpetuating a culture that marginalises and limits the potential impact of female scholars. The disparities also extend to research publications and career progression opportunities, as *"men get published and pushed further in the field."* Finally, the data reveals an unequal distribution of supervision support, with women *frequently "put to the back of the queue when asking for supervision support."*

Lessons from these conversations are likely comparable to the situation in most African HEIs and departments of education. Addressing these systemic issues is crucial for fostering an inclusive and equitable environment that enables the full participation and success of women in education research.





PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTINA MORILLO VIA PEXELS

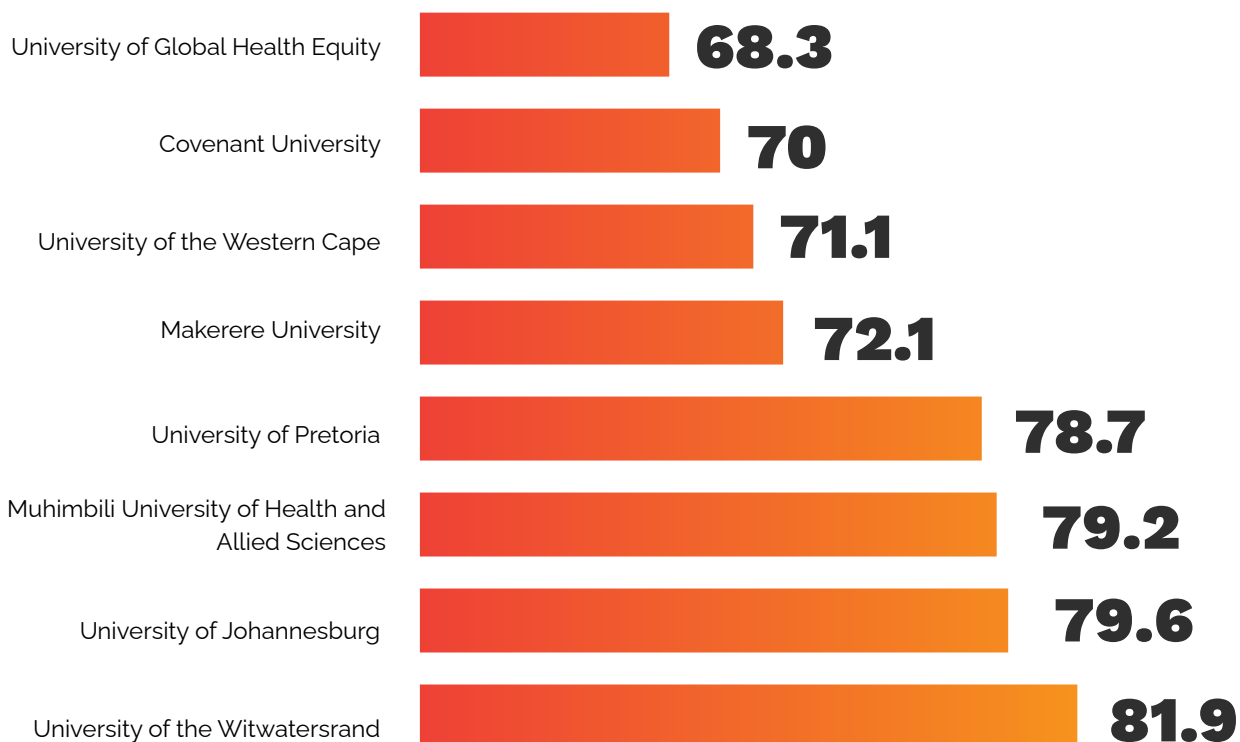
### 3.5. Research infrastructure in the field of education research

Research infrastructure is the connective tissue that strengthens each of the other four elements (knowledge base, resources, agenda, stakeholders) as well as complementarity between them by making stakeholders' efforts more coordinated, connected, and effective [Bridgespan Group \(2009\)](#) and [Lija, et al. \(2020\)](#). Hence, research infrastructure, which can be both groups of actors and institutions, plays a pivotal role in facilitating and promoting research. African education researchers have discussed the role of infrastructure in the field, touching on key aspects such as **Educational and Research Institutions, Research Networks and Conferences, Publishing and Dissemination Infrastructure, Ethical Review Boards**, among others.

**Educational Institutions:** Schools, colleges, universities, and research centres are critical infrastructures but also actors in the field of education research. Their importance to the field has been highlighted in recent research by [Douglass \(2014\)](#) and [Cloete et al. \(2018\)](#), where the authors

emphasise their role in knowledge production and dissemination. Moreover, in low-income settings, these institutions play a significant role in training and developing effective academic systems, thus enabling their countries to join the global debate on education

policy. Finally, besides knowledge production, training, and providing (or managing) research funding, existing research also highlights the role of knowledge repositories played by educational institutions ([Altbach, 2013](#)).



**Figure 7.** Sub-Saharan Africa University ranking – The Times 2023.

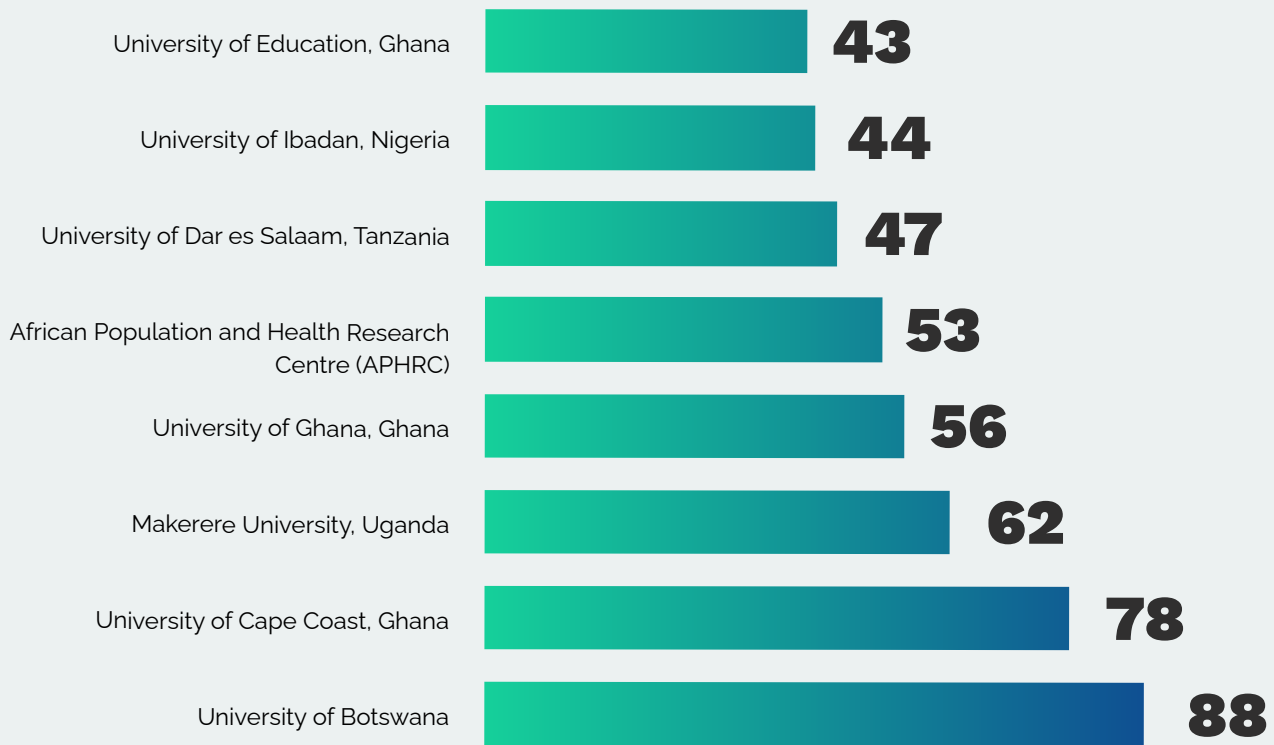
**Notes:** Top eight sub-Saharan Africa universities following [The Times Higher Education's ranking - 2023](#)

Existing ranking of educational institutions generally focuses on universities, without any particular attention to education research. **The existing ranking of African Universities, The Times' ranking (see Figure 6), uses overall data on resources and finances, fairness,**

**teaching skills, student engagement, Africa impact and number of students.** Universities with the lowest scores include Veritas University (Nigeria) and Red Sea University (Somalia).

Regarding education research specifically, [Rose et al. \(2019\)](#) propose

a ranking of sub-Saharan African higher education and research institutions based on 1,650 publications from the [AERD](#). Figure 7 show the top eight sub-Saharan Africa institutions based on education research outputs.



**Figure 8.** Top 7 institutions with most education research outputs (Rose et al., 2019)

**Notes:** The AERD does not include South Africa.

**Research Networks and Conferences:** These are the infrastructure that connect researchers and facilitate the exchange of ideas while also favouring networking and the dissemination of research findings. For [Johnson et al. \(2011\)](#) and [Sack et](#)

[al. \(2020\)](#), to cite a few, networks are the '*most effective way of optimising resources and strengthening capacities*' and a '*viable structure for developing education policy research in developing countries*'. This shows that the importance of network platforms in building the field of

education research in Africa cannot be overstated, as rightly noted by [Fiore \(2023\)](#). Besides thematic and country level networks, some regional and continental education research networks are well known on the continent.

## Main networks identified:



Regarding education research conferences, they are important to the field as they provide a platform for knowledge sharing, peer feedback as well as networking, as observed by DAAD (2019). Most education research networks, at country and continental levels, organise yearly events where challenges surrounding education evidence use, education system, access and quality, among others, are discussed. This is for instance the case of Ghana's annual Education Week (which includes an evidence day), AEAA and ECD Network Kenya annual conferences. Finally, we must acknowledge that there is no readily available and comprehensive database exclusively devoted to education research networks in Africa.

### **Publishing and Dissemination:**

Researchers also discussed the importance of publishing and accessing African education research. For Wolhuter (2019) and Marzagora (2016), the lack of robust publishing infrastructure and limited scholarly output in Africa in the field of education lead to an unbalanced

corpus of scientific knowledge compared to other regions. One of the adverse consequences of the latter is the dominance of foreign theoretical and philosophical frameworks in educational research, which is influencing practices within Africa, although never tested in Africa. Regarding dissemination platforms, their importance and impact have been stated in the recent contribution by Czerniewicz and Goodier (2014), who encourage African scholars to embrace open access and the repository routes, which appear to be mostly adopted and cited by African researchers (Simard et al., 2022).

Regarding research repositories, most university repositories on the continent encompass a wide range of disciplines. This is the case of UEWScholar of the University of Winneba (Ghana), UDOM-IR of the University of Dodoma (Tanzania), and the JKUAT Institutional Repository of Jomo Kenyatta University (Kenya) to cite a few. Besides institutional repositories, the African Journals Online (AJOL) offers a platform for

disseminating research published by 710 African peer reviewed scholarly journals located in 39 African countries.

There are also some emerging repositories in the field of education research that are dedicated to the dissemination and promotion of research outputs from African education researchers. These include, among others, the Kenya Education Research Database (KERD) and the African Education Research Database (AERD). Data from the African Journals Online (AJOL) help identify 52 education-related African scholarly journals. This includes the African Journal of Education, Science and Technology (in Kenya), the African Journal of Educational Research and Development and the Annals of Modern Education (in Nigeria), the Bahir Dar Journal of Education (in Ethiopia), the Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning and the International Journal of African Higher Education (in South Africa).

**Ethical Review Boards:** Infrastructure for ethical review of research proposals is essential to ensure that research is conducted in a manner that adheres to ethical standards. In Africa, the importance of ethical considerations in education research has been addressed by researchers such as [Pillay \(2014\)](#), [Ramrathan et al. \(2017\)](#) and [Olaniran and Baruwa \(2020\)](#) since no research can be conducted without due regard to ethics. Moreover, in recent reviews of educational research in sub-Saharan Africa, [Kurian and Singal \(2022\)](#) offer a large picture of ethical issues arising when involving young people in the research process, while [Olaniran and Baruwa \(2020\)](#) discuss the case of adult subjects, urging education scholars and practitioners to re-think ethical practices on the continent of Africa. Unfortunately, on the continent, there is a scarcity of cross-country comparative data that can be used to assess their situation in terms of usefulness, quality, and timeliness.



Finally, it is worth mentioning that some other elements such as **Research Facilities, Collaboration Tools, Research Support Services** and **Education Research Technology** have been mentioned in existing assessments as part of the infrastructure needed for a vibrant and sustainable field of education research in Africa. These elements also participate in connecting the actors in the education research ecosystem. Nevertheless, existing research to date does not make it possible to assess the current state of many elements characterising research infrastructure on the continent.

## Key point summary:

- Education research in Africa is dominated by few universities, mostly located in South Africa and Nigeria followed by Botswana, Kenya and Ghana.
- Besides country level education networks, regional and continental education research networks are emerging.
- Promising continental education research dedicated repositories can be identified, including the KERD, the AERD and the AJOL.
- There is a scarcity of cross-country comparative data to assess the situation of Ethical Review Boards, Research Support Services and Research Technology, among others.

<sup>3</sup> 710 is the Figure in November 2023. AJOL is not a publisher. It serves as a repository for journals.

# Qualitative data

Data gathered through KIIs and group discussions provides a comprehensive overview about the state of education research in Africa. Drawing on insights provided by emerging and experienced researchers, leaders in educational and research institutions, and other experts from various African countries, we intend to propose a SWOT analysis considering the five key characteristics of the field building framework, as introduced previously. Before delving into that, this section provides an overview of the data.



## 4.1. Knowledge base

“

I can tell you that endogenous scientific production, even more in the field of education is not being considered and used by our decision-makers."

*(University Rector)*

Researchers in Africa produce a substantial amount of education research, driven in part by funding, collaboration, and career progression needs. Private organisations actively contribute to this knowledge production. Regarding quality, while some publications are of high-quality, others are perceived to be subpar. Nevertheless, despite the growing number of publications, their relevance to informing local policy and practice remains a concern.

The disconnect between research output (supply) and the needs (demand) of decision-makers is a recurring theme. This is attributed to numerous factors, including a lack of clear research agendas, limited resources for research, and the lack of collaboration and communication between researchers and decision-makers. While stakeholders in some countries aim to bridge this gap, challenges persist in aligning research with policymaker

perspectives. Finally, the interviews reveal that funding, infrastructure, and support for research vary widely across African countries. The concentration of research in a few countries and around few thematic areas, the influence of international funders, and the neglect of social sciences in favour of STEM are highlighted as weaknesses.

In summary, the data emphasises the need for funding, a shared vision of education research priorities, more effective communication, collaboration to improve the quality, the relevance and use of education evidence. Bridging the gap between research output and policymaking is essential to address the unique challenges facing education systems on the continent. Additionally, encouraging early career researchers and addressing disparities in education research should be key priorities for advancing education research in Africa.

## 4.2. Funding and non-financial support



Quality of research outputs – doing research in a particular area you need funds but this is not forthcoming but this may hinder the sample size and once this is limited you may not generate the data that can be generalised to the larger population because you confined to size of sample to the size of your pocket."

*(Researcher & University lecturer)*

Although Africa-based researchers are committed to contributing to education research at local and global levels, funding opportunities are very limited. This perspective is widely shared by the interviewees. The data also suggests that most funding is provided by international donors, among others, the Jacobs Foundation, the Mastercard Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), and International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Canada, which play a critical role in supporting research initiatives aligned with their missions. In so doing, these donors offer African researchers and research organisations further avenues for funding, research dissemination and international collaboration. Nevertheless, as funders have their own research priorities, African researchers find themselves navigating a landscape where external organisations exert significant control over resources, research allocation, and therefore the research agendas.

In conclusion, quality and large-scale research depends on funding availability and the resource constraints observed on the continent seem to persist, threatening the quality and depth of research published, and impeding the field's ability to provide endogenous solutions to pressing educational challenges.

## 4.3. Field-level research agenda



I think, we lack communication opportunity to discuss research needed by decision-makers."

*(Education Policy Analyst)*

Interview data reveals varying levels of stakeholders' awareness regarding country level education research priorities. While most countries have an educational sector plan and planning tools that are widely shared, most interviewees reported a lack of clearly defined research agendas at their respective institutions, national levels, or within the region. Interviewees, however, acknowledged the importance of a collaboration and partnership between education research institutions, researchers, and decision-makers to define knowledge gaps and research priorities that deserve immediate attention. In Ivory Coast and Ghana, interviewees highlighted ongoing initiatives to develop and sustain a list of education research priorities. Moreover, numerous researchers expressed their desire to witness the emergence of education research priorities aligned with local goals and SDGs in their respective countries.

Finally, the perspective and experience shared by the different stakeholders indicate that an education research landscape with a well-defined research agenda at a country level is crucial for useful research and evidence-based education decision-making and planning.





There is currently a collaborative initiative involving researchers, the ministry of education, the IPA, among others, to develop a list of education research priorities or agenda."

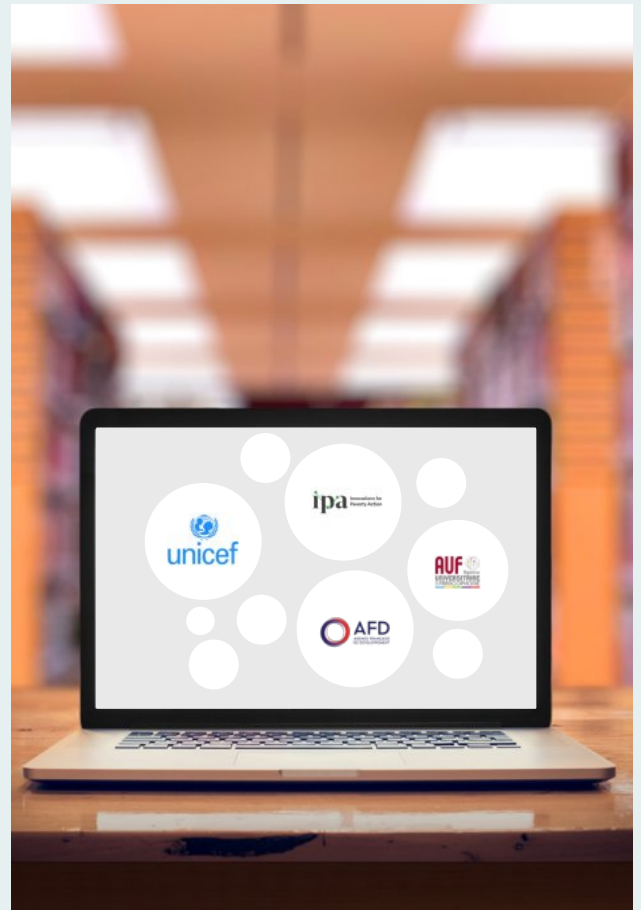
*(Evidence and Policy Manager)*

## 4.4. Infrastructure

The interview data highlights the importance and the status of research infrastructure on the continent, where several key elements are emerging. Among other things, we are witnessing the emergence of (thematic) networks and education research organisations that regularly bring together researchers, thus promoting research collaboration and strengthening the field. Although some education data systems emerge, mostly at country level, the interviewees point out challenges in accessing research data, alongside other systemic barriers, that withhold conducting quality research.

Also, the interviews highlight the promising role of technology integration and international organisations such as UNICEF, IPA, AFD, and Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), among others, in funding and strengthening research infrastructure. Finally, it is worth noting that some interviewees report frustrations they experience relating to access to timely and quality research data and the absence of institutional support and funds to attend thematic workshops and international conferences. The lack of networking opportunities and spaces for collaboration has been highlighted as well.

In conclusion, while promising development in education research infrastructure is observed in some countries, challenges such as inconsistent institutional support, extremely limited resources, data accessibility issues, and political influences persist in most countries.



Institutional support for us as researchers to do our work on-the-ground. If I am not given a platform to do research, then I will stop doing research."

*(Professor)*

## 4.5. Actors: Overview of the data

“

Decision-makers specially from the ministry of education are very relevant stakeholders."

*(Policy Manager)*

"Development partners active in the domain of education will also be very interesting stakeholders that you may talk to."

*(Policy Manager)*

"I think essential actors are the lecturers and teachers."

*(Government funder)*

The data reveals the existence of a dynamic ecosystem of actors, the strength of which can be attributed to the diverse groups of institutions and individuals actively involved in research, regional cooperation, international collaboration, and dissemination. Despite the commitment of education research stakeholders, notable weaknesses, including fragmentation within the research community, lack of interest of decision-makers and research culture as well as limited funding, have been identified by interviewees.

In addition, the lack of political will to promote evidence-based policymaking poses serious threats to the ecosystem. Nevertheless, interviewees highlighted strengthening partnerships with development organisations, building research capacity, and fostering regional cooperation among education researchers as potential avenues for enhancing education research on the continent.



“

There is a huge discrepancy that I see and it's very obvious from where I sit. What researchers do doesn't count if it doesn't get to the table where decisions are being made. This needs to be sorted out."

*(Principal Education Officer)*

# SWOT analysis

This section proposes a SWOT analysis that synthesises the data collected through, desk reviews, and group discussions. As previously introduced, it targets the five main characteristics of the field building framework and organise the data to assess the state of each of the characteristic considered. Lessons learnt from the SWOT analysis will help develop action points to inform the next stages of the EERA project.

## 5.1. Knowledge base: Overview of the data and SWOT analysis

### → Strengths

**Research activities and outputs:** A large volume of education research output is being observed, with researchers focusing on thematic areas that align with emerging priorities, such as technology in education and early childhood development. Both public and private institutions are engaging in academic production, which signals a relatively vibrant research culture in some African countries.

**Various thematic areas covered:** Education research in Africa covers a variety of thematic areas, the five mostly researched areas being *Language and curriculum*, *Teachers and teaching*, *culture and facilities*, *Equitable and inclusive education*, and *Policy and financing*.

**Increasing research quality:** There are high-quality publications in the knowledge available. Some researchers produce works that meet the most rigorous standards, contributing to the credibility of educational research locally produced.

**Some countries are very active in the field:** South Africa (followed by Nigeria) leads education research outputs on the continent, serving as a driving force that pulls the rest of the countries in the field of education research.

**International collaborations:** Collaborations with Northern institutions represent a significant share of knowledge available and tends to drive funding and quality as well as exposing education research produced in Africa.

### → Opportunities

**Harnessing grey literature:** PhD theses and research reports by local organisations represent a valuable source of knowledge but this remains mostly untapped.

**Growing appetite for education research:** Local decision-makers and development partners show a growing appetite for education research and planning tools, which is materialised by projects initiated and funded by these stakeholders.

**Demand-led research:** Given the growing local appetite for research, researchers can focus on demand-led topics by considering the needs of teachers, parents, and students. Tailoring research can increase relevance and utilisation.

**Bridging the gap:** There is an opportunity to bridge the gap between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. Involving policymakers in the research process and translating findings into actionable decisions can enhance the impact of research.

**Exploring dissemination channels:** There is an opportunity for researchers and institutions to use diverse channels such as policy briefs and general public formats to communicate research findings effectively, making it more accessible and actionable.

### → Weaknesses

**Resource constraints:** Resource limitations, including funding and infrastructure, continue to impede research efforts, affecting the depth and breadth of research projects.

**Limited resources:** Researchers face constraints such as limited time for research due to administrative tasks and insufficient resources, hampering their ability to conduct in-depth studies.

**Noticeable quality discrepancy:** Education research is mostly conducted using small sample size data, which limits the representativeness of findings. Most papers are published in local and predatory journals.

**Research Framing:** The questions posed in many research projects are often not well-framed to address on-the-ground realities and seem disconnected from the demand.

**Difficult to find:** Research output by/for/in Africa is under-represented in global debate and even difficult to find.

**Language divide:** Education research published in French, Portuguese and Spanish are disregarded in most international research databases.

**Poor coordination:** This leads to persistent gaps, lack of focus and repetition of research.

**Some thematic areas are relatively less discussed:** There persists areas that are poorly researched. This concerns for instance early childhood development, use of local languages, TVET, implementation research and quantitative research.

### → Threats

**Limited engagement with decision-makers and use of evidence:** The research outputs often remain within the context of academic publications and fail to translate into actionable decisions. Policymakers and practitioners are sometimes disconnected from the research process, leading to a lack of buy-in and use, which compromise the usefulness and impact of education research.

**Research is funder-driven:** The financial vulnerability threatens the autonomy of local research priorities and could compromise the relevance of research to African contexts.

**Research output and quality:** Publishing only due to pressure for academic promotion, threatens the credibility and impact of research outputs.

## 5.2. Resources/funding: Overview of the data and SWOT analysis

### → Strengths

**International donor and private funders:** Some international organisations, development partners and various non-profit organisations provide education research-specific funding, promoting research in the field and capacity building activities on the continents.

**Funding-led international collaboration:** Most education research fundings being from the North, they have facilitated collaboration with international partners and organisations, leveraging external resources and expertise.

**Emerging South-South models:** Successful and greatly appreciated models of local research funding do exist (and some others are emerging) on the continent that can be learnt from (e.g., the National Research Foundation in South Africa and Tertiary Education Trust (TET) Fund in Nigeria).

### → Weaknesses

**Very limited funding opportunities:** Around 10% of education research publications is funded.

**Extremely limited public funding:** Public funding for education research is insufficient, leading to a heavy reliance on self-funding research and misalignment with national priorities.

**Project-specific funding:** Most research projects rely on programme-specific and limited funding, which hinders long-term sustainability, follow-up studies and research agendas.

**Limited coordination:** The lack of coordination among researchers (relating to research topics already or being funded) results in inefficiencies and duplication of efforts.

**Researchers' dependency on consultancies:** The lack of proper research funding drives some researchers to resort to conducting consultancies for private organisations as an alternative source of income for their research projects, crowding out time for academic research and mentoring.

### → Opportunities

**Emerging public funding:** Despite being small, there are some grants coming from governments and African organisations for education research. Promoting this opportunity will promote quality education research on the continent.

**Leveraging Africa-based private funders:** African non-profit organisations and foundations supporting education represent opportunities for further education research funding and partnership.

**Coordinating efforts:** Establishing better coordination among local and international funding agencies and governments is an opportunity to fund useful and targeted education research projects.

**Public policy influence:** Given public demand for education research and planning tools, there is an opportunity to influence education policies, leading to more informed decision-making, if relevant research projects are funded and rightly disseminated.

**Leveraging researchers' commitment:** Education researchers' engagement to conduct research despite lack of funds is an opportunity that can be leveraged for policy-relevant research, when provided with financial and non-financial resources.

### → Threats

**Second-rank priority:** Research, particularly education research, is not considered a priority by African decision-makers and sometimes by universities themselves. This poses a serious threat to resource allocation to research.

**Dependency on external funding:** Heavy reliance on external funders can be risky, as their priorities may not always align with local needs, may limit the scope of research projects, or even change over time.

**Budgetary constraints:** Economic challenges and political instability in some African countries can further limit government funding for research.

**Complex funding procedures:** Researchers in Africa feel 'shut out' of funding opportunities – processes are complex and feel mysterious and countercultural. Also, terms of funding can be highly restrictive and do not allow for adaptation.

**Lack of coordination among funders:** This leads to duplication of efforts in funding similar initiatives.

**Education research** is not seen as an investment and will not generate revenue in the way STEM research can.

## 5.3. Field-level agenda: Overview of the data and SWOT analysis

### → Strengths

**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 Cote d'Ivoire) show a willingness to work together and align research with local challenges and educational goals.

**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.

**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.

### → Opportunities

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

### → Weaknesses

**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.

**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.

**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.

### → Threats

**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.

**Influence of donors:** External partners and funders often hold considerable influence due to financial support, potentially driving research priorities away from local needs.

**Limited resources to pursue agenda:** The limited availability of funds for education research can hinder the ability of public authorities to support research agendas.

## 5.4. Infrastructure: Overview of the data and SWOT analysis

### → Strengths

**Emerging networks:** There are emerging networks and groups of education research organisations that are actively working to strengthen the field of education research by convening stakeholders and fostering collaboration.

**Local evidence dissemination platforms:** Many higher education and research institutions host education data and research repositories, as well as dissemination platforms. This is the case of the [APHRC microdata Portal](#), [KERD](#), among others.

**Regional initiatives:** Some regional initiatives and events are emerging in the field of education research, offering stakeholders spaces for networking and evidence-based discourses. This is the case of country levels ECD networks, ADEA, EE4A, among others.

### → Weaknesses

**Limited support:** Building regional and continental level research infrastructures requires support and resources, that are not allocated by national budgets. Inconsistent institutional support for researchers, including access to high-quality research databases, timely data

**Limited coordination:** At country level, there is a lack of a centralised coordinating body that structures the role of actors in the field of education research and helps avoid duplication of efforts.

**Poor physical infrastructures:** Poor facilities, ICT systems and laboratories for experimental education research hinder quality research.

**Data accessibility:** The absence of data infrastructure or difficulties to access data collected by public authorities weaken research.

**Systemic barriers and lack of proper research collaboration tools:** Relying on social media may not be the most effective way to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among education researchers.

### → Opportunities

**Mentorship and capacity building:** Mentoring early career researchers and emphasising researchers' capacity building and skill development present an opportunity to enhance research quality on the continent.

**South-South peer learning:** There is a call for South-South fellowship programmes and training on research and grant writing skills (short-courses, exchange programmes, fellowships).

**Education research consortium:** National and regional associations and thematic networks present an opportunity to integrate into a continental education research consortium.

### → Threats

**Restricted access to data:** Difficulties in accessing basic information and data, along with systemic barriers, pose significant threats to research quality and progress.

**Poor dissemination infrastructure:** The presence of predatory journals and poor-quality journals in general does not promote quality research.

**Low levels of support:** Lack of institutional support for emerging efforts to establish infrastructure does not encourage new initiatives.

## 5.5. Actors: Overview of the data and SWOT analysis

### → Strengths

**Various stakeholders:** Diverse groups of actors are involved in education research in Africa, including government agencies, NGOs, universities, think tanks, and international organisations. This diversity, which signals a relatively vibrant research culture in some African countries, can provide different perspectives and resources.

**Professional organisations:** Professional organisations like the Education Management Society of Kenya and the Association of Education Researchers (AIRE) in Ivory Coast, the RACESE (Réseau Africain des Chercheurs et Enseignants en Sciences de l'Education), among others, play crucial roles in fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing among researchers.

**Impactful public intellectuals:** There are few 'public intellectuals' and 'champions' in the field of education who have found ways to influence the system.

**Committed actors:** Despite resource constraints, there are committed actors (researchers, government agencies, NGOs, universities, think tanks,) working to strengthen the field of education research.

### → Weaknesses

**Fragmented community:** Despite the presence of various actors, there is a lack of communication among actors for a cohesive and shared vision (priority) in the education research community, which hinders progress, effective cooperation, and system change.

**Lack of communication:** Lack of communication and collaboration among stakeholders in the field, government agencies and researchers for instance, to discuss research needed.

**Language barrier:** Education researchers seem confined in linguistic silos. These barriers hinder regional and international collaborations.

**Research culture:** Stakeholders of many academic institutions as well as decision-makers lack a strong research culture, which causes limited support for research and obstructs evidence-based decision-making.

**High gender disparities:** Data on academic staff shows a 25% vs. 75% ratio indicating that female education researchers are under-represented in sub-Saharan Africa. Comparable figures appear in terms of research outputs.

**Limited support for early career researchers:** Young researchers lack networking opportunities, guidance, mentoring, and assistance to develop research capacity and secure funding.

### → Opportunities

**Government support:** Government bodies, such as the National Research Fund (NRF) in South Africa, can play a vital role in providing financial support for education research initiatives. A stronger commitment from governments could lead to increased research funding.

**Regional cooperation:** Organisations like the Association of African Universities (AAU) can facilitate regional cooperation and knowledge exchange, promoting a shared vision for education research in Africa.

**Capacity building:** Initiatives like the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA) and mentorship programmes can enhance the capacity of early career researchers, leading to more impactful studies.

### → Threats

**Low levels of financial support:** The limited availability of funding can constrain research activities and actors' commitment. It may also hinder the growth and sustainability of education research initiatives.

**Lack of political will:** The absence of political will to base decisions on evidence from research remains a significant threat.

**Competing agendas:** Different actors may have divergent priorities and agendas, making it challenging to align efforts and achieve a shared vision for education research.

**Inadequate dissemination:** Failure to effectively disseminate research findings to policymakers and the public can undermine the potential impact of education research.



# Conclusion:

## Assessment and way forward

### 6.1. Overall assessment of the field

The field of education research in Africa, while still emerging, exhibits various strengths and opportunities. Considering knowledge production, for instance, **a rapid increase in publications has been observed over the last two decades across most African countries.** Academics, including early career researchers,

are actively engaged in generating knowledge, despite the lack of funding opportunities. Regarding infrastructure, **a few countries exhibit major progress in improving research infrastructure (e.g., South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya),** significantly contributing to education research output on the continent.

Various groups of stakeholders at country level, including government agencies, **NGOs, universities, and think tanks, and collaboration with international partners are promoting quality knowledge generation, dissemination, and capacity building.**



Besides these positive notes, a series of issues emerged regarding **the rigour and quality of studies** produced by African education researchers. Among others, **funding challenges, poor public support and physical infrastructure remain significant obstacles**, resulting in limitations in the scope of most research endeavours. Also, the field exhibits **fragmented research efforts due to the lack of a coherent and unified agenda** in most countries, making it challenging to comprehensively prioritise and investigate critical educational issues. Finally, stakeholders also highlight existing **gaps between the research produced and its application**, with valuable findings not effectively used by education decision-makers and practitioners. These concerns weaken the potential impact of research on educational practices and policies in the region.

Numerous substantial challenges threaten the field of education research on the continent. Prominent among these are **resource**

**constraints and the reliance on external funding**, which can be linked to the disconnect between some research outputs and the needs of decision-makers. Another aspect of the latter disconnect is the prioritisation of research publications for career progression purposes. Also, **early career researchers' lack of mentorship, guidance, and funds to attend thematic conferences, along with challenges in publishing in reputable journals**, also pose threats to the overall quality of education research on the continent. Finally, large gender disparities in education research production can be observed in most countries.

There are also several promising opportunities for advancing education research in Africa. First, the **increase in education research publications and research institutions, coupled with some local initiatives** in some African countries signal a rising interest and capacity for education research in Africa. Second, **the emergence of thematic networks and collaborative efforts** such as the

AAU, EE4A, among others, present a real opportunity to join forces and promote education research excellence across the continent. Third, **the presence of new universities, education research institutions and networks of education researchers** in countries where education research is not intensive offers the possibility of enhancing education research infrastructures. Finally, **cross-country collaboration and partnership with well-established external institutions** provide an opportunity for capacity building and resource mobilisation for impactful education research.

The strengths and opportunities identified, if effectively harnessed, can help increase the quality, relevance, and impact of education research in Africa. Hereafter, some action points (Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Strengths - TOWS matrix) or strategies that build on the strengths and opportunities of the African education research landscape to address its threats and weaknesses.

## → Strengths to create opportunities

- Make education research more available and actionable, by exploring and using diverse dissemination channels, catering to the growing appetite for evidence.
- Capitalise on emerging regional initiatives by promoting them as models for aligning research with local challenges and educational goals across more African countries.
- Address the threat of political influence and changing priorities by using alignment with local and global goals to advocate for the development, continuity and stability of research agendas irrespective of leadership changes.
- Encourage capacity building programmes and use emerging networks and education research organisations to mentor and provide capacity building opportunities especially for early career researchers, making them better equipped to contribute to impactful studies.
- Leverage (local) regional initiatives to establish a (country level) continental education research body that can address the need for better coordination, dissemination, and support.

## → Strengths to address threats

- Rely on the commitment of researchers and donors to advocate for increased government support for education research. This, when aligned with local and global goals (such as SDG-4), will gain support from decision-makers and donors, and could lead to a stronger financial.
- Encourage researchers to publish not just for academic promotion but to have a meaningful impact on local education policies and practices.
- Mitigate the lack of political will by utilising the influence of donors, development partners, impactful public intellectuals and committed researchers to encourage evidence-based decision-making.
- Mitigate the threat of poor dissemination infrastructure by working with regional initiatives and education research organisations to establish quality standards and promote reputable journals.
- Strengthen the capacity of motivated and committed actors to engage in knowledge translation and research for uptake.
- Include STEM in the Education research agenda to capitalise on the interest in STEM in Africa.

## → Opportunities to address weaknesses

- Support the development of cohesive and shared agendas for education research in countries where they are lacking, aligning them with national priorities and government plans to better address local issues.
- Focus on demand-led topics and tailor research to meet the needs of teachers, parents, and students to enhance relevance and use of evidence.
- Encourage external donors and development partners to provide funding and support for government-led education research agendas, thus promoting local agendas.
- Encourage better coordination among researchers, South-South peer learning initiatives and the use of collaborative tools for knowledge sharing among education researchers, compensating for poor physical infrastructure and coordination.
- Promote inclusion and gender equity in the field. Governments, professional organisations, and funders supporting education research are also encouraged to use their influence to promote inclusion and gender equity in the field.

## → Opportunities to address threats

- Address the disconnection between researchers and decision-makers by actively involving policymakers in the research process and ensuring that research questions are well-framed to address on-the-ground realities.
- To address the extremely limited public funding and complex funding procedures, researchers need to work collectively to influence decision-makers to allocate more budgetary resources to education research.
- Address the limited coordination issue by involving continental education research organisations, like AAU, to structure and centralise the role of actors in education research.
- Establish partnerships with reputable organisations and leverage their support to overcome the challenges posed by poor data platforms and access to data.

## 6.2. Way forward

The situational analysis presented in this report allows us to understand the current state of play as regards the field of education research in Africa. Evaluating the field of education research in Africa through the lenses of knowledge production, research agenda, funding, actors and infrastructures allows for an in-depth understanding of the critical components of a strong field of research. The SWOT analyses of each of the five characteristics and the action points matrix bring to light themes that will be explored through the next steps of the theory of change process. The analysis reveals an urgent need to:

- Promote education research not just for academic promotion but to have a meaningful impact on local education policies and practices.
- Address the extremely limited (public) funding opportunities for education research.
- Address the disconnection between researchers and decision-makers.
- Encourage donors and development partners to provide funding and support for government-led education research priorities, thus promoting local agendas.
- Promote inclusion, gender equity, capacity building programmes and South-South peer learning networks.

Using this situational analysis as a foundation, ESSA and Southern Hemisphere will initiate a theory of change process. Initially, long-term outcomes will be developed by leveraging stakeholders' visions for the field of education research in Africa as well as their expectation for an enhanced landscape. Subsequently, building on lessons from this situational analysis, a process of Pathways of Change involving a steering committee and other education research stakeholders will be initiated to propose tailored interventions and projects to help enhance the field of education research on the continent.

You can stay up to date with the progress of the project, which runs until the end of 2024, [here](#) and sign up for updates and opportunities to engage [here](#).



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# Annexes

## Annex 1. Key informant interview instrument

Respondent's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Respondent's telephone no.: \_\_\_\_\_

Respondent's email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's name: \_\_\_\_\_

### → Knowledge base

#### **Purpose: to understand strengths, challenges, and gaps in knowledge production**

- Please tell me briefly about your role at your institution related to education research.
- Given your understanding of the field of education research in your institution/country, what can you tell us about the following elements: Research output: Do researchers generate enough evidence? Is the research output relevant for policy or decision-making?
- What do you think about the quality of the research outputs generated?
- Do you think that most research outputs are useful for making decisions and informing practice?
- In your opinion, are there discrepancies between what is published and what decision-makers and practitioners may need? Please explain further (Probe to understand what category of decision-makers the interviewee is referring to)
- What would make the research more useful e.g., probe: better data, more disaggregated data, open access journals, knowledge translation, more demand-led?

#### **For researchers only:**

- How do you decide where to focus your research activities? (Probe: Is it based on resource availability? Personal interest? Demand for decision-makers or practitioners? Likelihood of publication? Research agenda from your institution?)

## → Resource (Financial and non-financial support)

**Purpose: To understand research funding availability, types, access, challenges, and usefulness in the field of education research**

- What funding for education research are you aware of, if at all (Private funders (donors); public funding - government)?
- What does the funding cover in case you know? (e.g., research costs, overheads, trainings, travel to conferences, publication)?
- From your perspective, how would you describe the process of accessing education research funding?
- If there is no private or public funding available, how are research activities resourced? How do you or researchers proceed to conduct research?
- Are there any non-financial supports to conduct research available at your institution? (planning, writing, disseminating research, capacity strengthening)?
- From what you know about research funding, do you think there is coordination among private research funders? Please explain your answer

## → Actors/stakeholders

**Purpose: Identify at local and regional levels main stakeholders working toward building the field of education research and what they are concretely doing.**

- From what you know about education research, are you aware of any organisations or individuals working toward building the field of education research in your country or at regional level?
- Can you give specific examples of organisations (national, regional or international bodies) active in building the field of ed research? (Probe to understand if there are any public organisations)
- Can you give specific examples of individuals active in building the field of ed research?
- Who or what type of actors, beyond researchers, do you think will have the most direct impact in building the field of education research in Africa?
- To what extent do you think the actors have a shared vision for education research in your country or region?

## → Field-level agenda

**Purpose: To understand, if any, existing education research agenda at the level of institutions, in addition to country level field development agenda for education research.**

- From what you know about education research, are you aware of any education research agenda at the level of your institution, country, or region? If so, can you give some details?
- Is there anything (any agenda) that you would like to see? Any priorities for education research topics or agenda to strengthen the entire educational research sector?
- Have you seen anything in the field of research or elsewhere that you think may help change/develop/strengthen the education research in Sub-Saharan Africa?
- Are you aware of any national education research strategy or any initiative to strengthen the field of education research in your country? Please elaborate if possible

## → Infrastructure: the tissue that strengthens of the other elements

**Purpose: To identify existing infrastructure strengthening the field of education research in Africa. And what such an infrastructure may look like in case there is none so far.**

- Are you aware of any leading organisation in your country that is strengthening the field of education research by convening stakeholders, by proposing a clear research agenda and supporting/financing research activities?
- Is there any similar leading organisation at the continental level you are aware of?
- According to you, what is mostly needed to build a strong research system in the field of education.

## → Closing questions

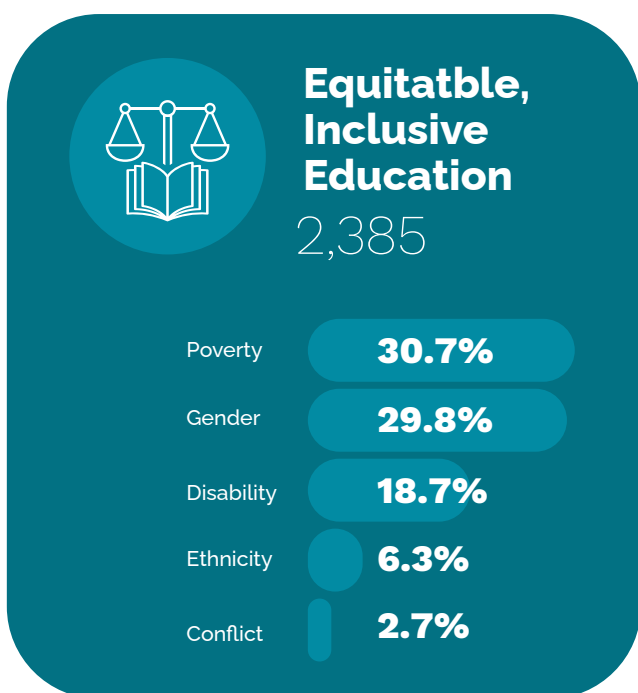
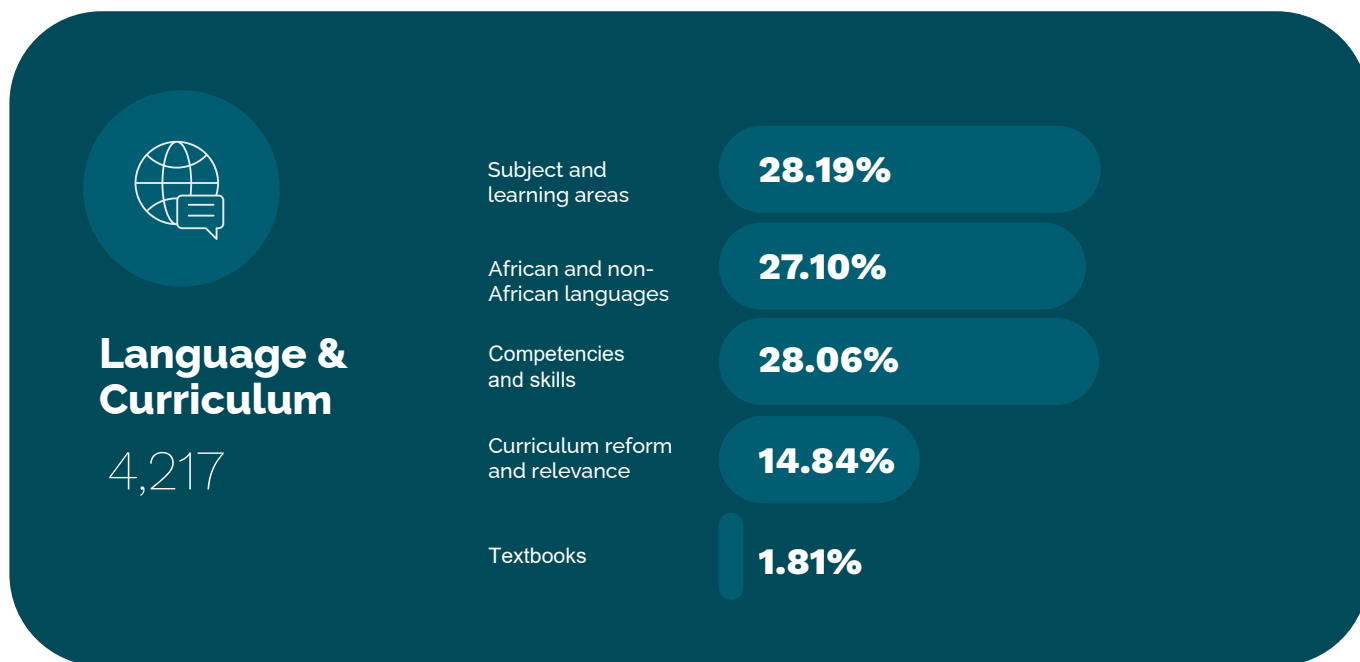
- Are you aware of any consortium in education (or from the other fields) that is strengthening the field, the model of which, can be used as reference?
- What do think is needed to strengthen the field of education research?

**Thank you for your time and input.**

# Annex 2. Thematic areas in the field of education research

## 2.1: An overall perspective

Thematic areas in the field of education research





## Students, Learning & Assessment

1,446

Learning outcomes

35.5%

Student motivation and career

26.1%

Household factors and learning

17.02%

Assessment

15.1%

Student voice

6.4%



## Institutional Leadership, Culture & Facilities

2,144

Leadership and management

43.2%

Institutional culture

33.1%

Facilities

23.7%



## Policy & Financing

1,749

Policy

41.9%

Governance and financing

29.1%

Non-state stakeholders

14.7%

Policy implication

14.2%



## Access to Education

915

Participation

38%

Inclusive provision

25.9%

Alternative provision

16.6%

Exclusion

12.9%

Expansion of provision

6.4%



## ICT

1,550

ICT in education

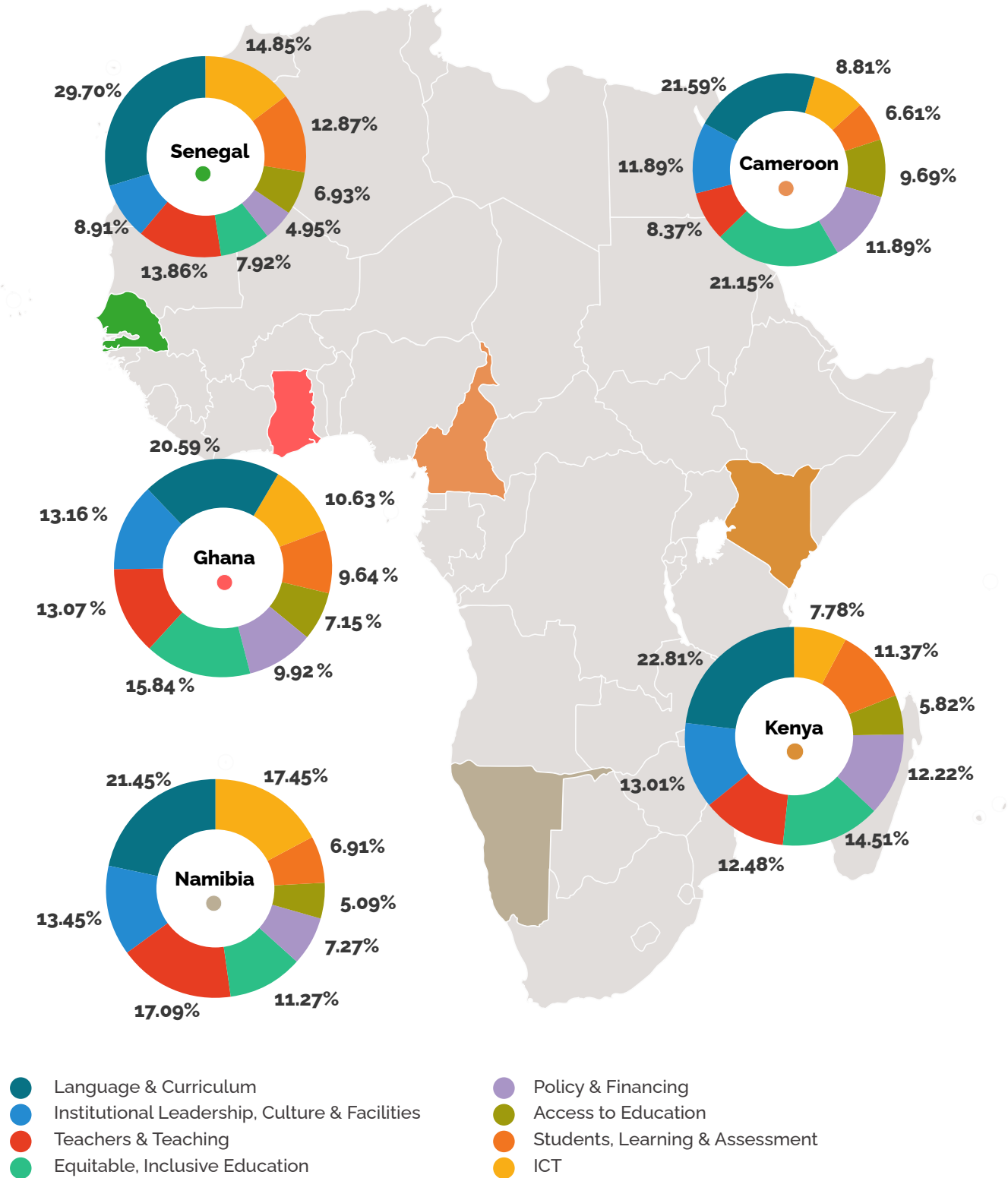
59.4%

ICT for teaching and learning

40.6%

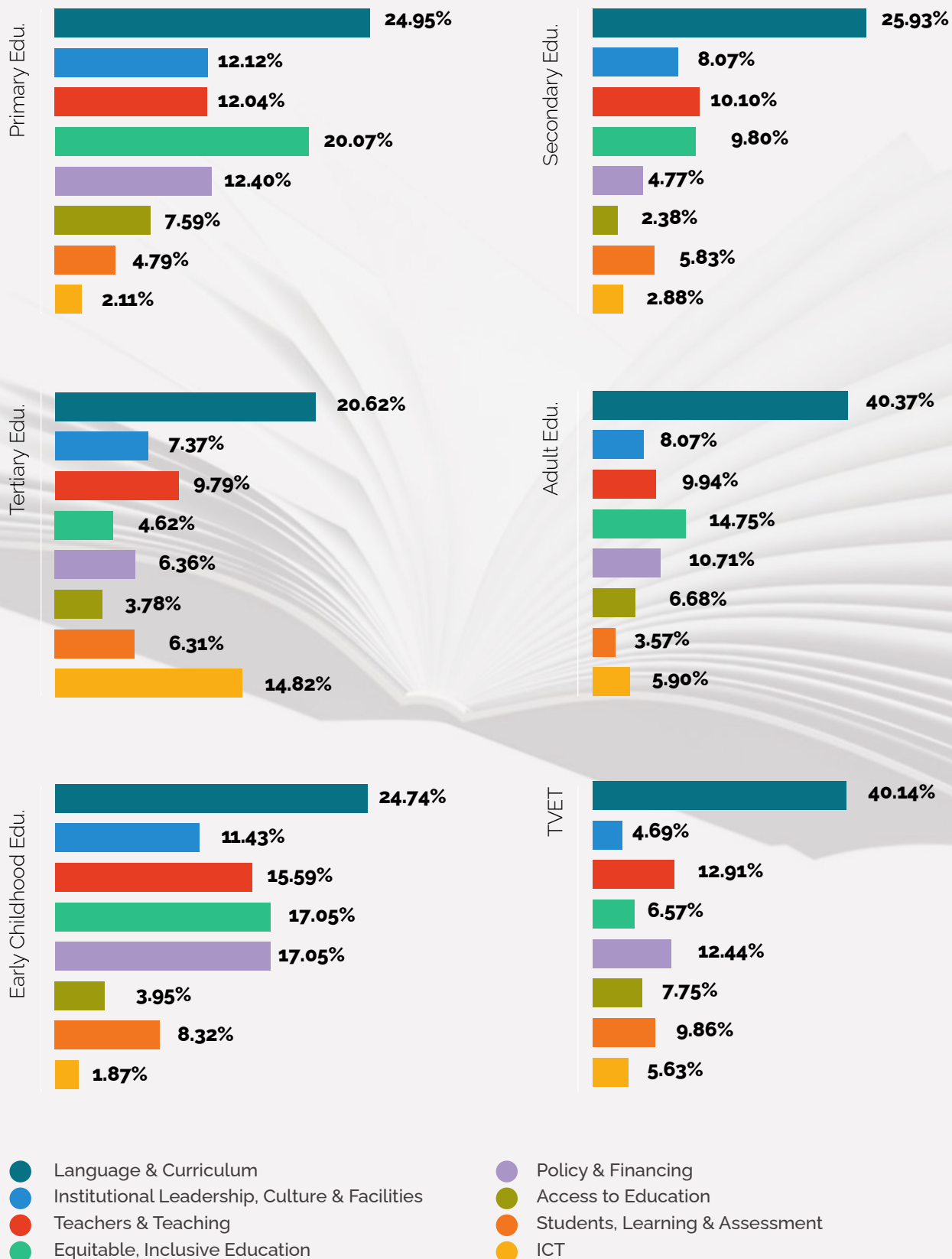
# 2.2. Heterogeneity analysis based on selected countries

Thematic areas: Heterogeneities across countries (in %)



## 2.3. Thematic areas by phase of education

Thematic areas by phase of education (in %)



## Annex 3. EERA: Main engagements



### The COREVIP (AAU)



From 4 to 7 July 2023



Namibia

**Main activities:** The EERA Project Team organised a consultation session with leaders of universities and higher education institutions. The project has been launched and its background/purpose was shared with these stakeholders.

#### The main objectives of the session were:

- Launch the Enhancing Education Research in Africa Project;
- Generate stakeholder interest in the project to maximise engagement for future conversation and data collection (interviews);
- Inviting stakeholders' inputs into the process;
- Generate a vision for the Education Research Sector in Africa.



### The 2023 ARUA Conference,



from 15 to 17 November 2023



Nigeria

**Main activities:** The EERA Team organised two side-events attended by around 25 stakeholders from various countries and academic disciplines, including education, health and nutrition sciences.

#### The objectives of the side were to:

- Present the project and the situational analysis to various stakeholders for feedback;
- Initiate group conversations to identify what we have missed in the process in the design and visioning processes;
- Learn lessons from other disciplines;
- Collect additional qualitative data to feed into the situational analysis and the up-coming Theory of Change process.





## The ICERDA 2023 Conference

 from 19 to 21 September  Ghana

**Main activities:** The EERA Project team organised two sessions, one with breakout groups and the other with an overall group conversation about the strengths and weaknesses of the field of education research on the continent.

### Briefly, we:

- Presented the background/purposes of the EERA Project;
- Presented progress so far and some elements of the situational analysis for engagement;
- Invited stakeholders for feedback and comments;
- Engaged groups of stakeholders in the development of a SWOT analysis considering one element of the field building framework (one element per group);
- Collected qualitative data to feed into the situational analysis.



## The 2023 EE4A Conference

 from 29 to 30 November 2023  Kenya

**Main activities:** The EERA Project Team and Prof. Bernard Nyatuka of Kisii University organised two separate focus group discussions with education early career and senior researchers.

### Our objectives were:

- Present the EERA project and share the findings from the situational analysis with African education researchers;
- Assess how our findings resonate with education researchers;
- Collect additional primary data to feed into the situational analysis;
- Exploit the outcomes of the sessions to inform the theory of change process.

## Annex 4: About the AERD

# African Education Research Database



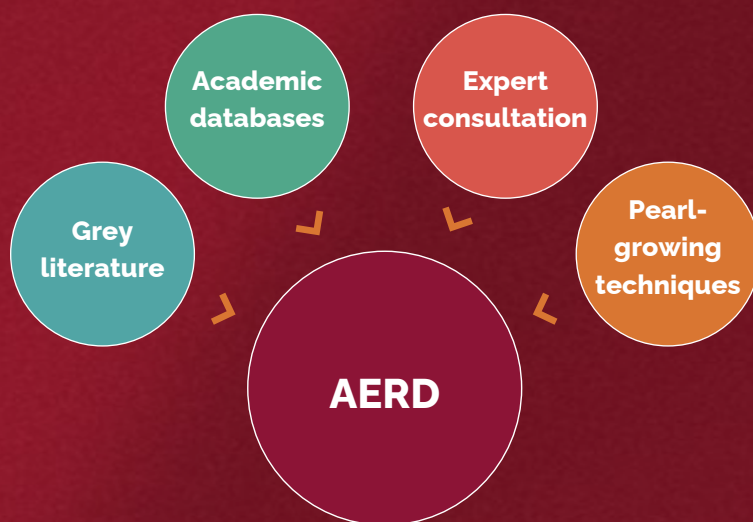
### The AERD: Aims and Scope

- The AERD is developed by the REAL Centre at the University of Cambridge, in partnership with Education Sub Saharan Africa – ESSA, and was launched in 2017. The database catalogues education research by scholars based in sub-Saharan Africa.
- The objective of cataloguing this research and making it easily accessible is: to improve the visibility and accessibility of quality education research by scholars based in sub-Saharan Africa; to strengthen the use of this evidence base for informing education policy and practice in the region; to inform research priorities by providing an up-to-date overview of existing research and a gap analysis of the current research landscape by these scholars; and to promote a community of education researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders in the region.

### Method and search protocol

The AERD project identifies: (a) social science research with (b) implications for recent and current education policy and practice that has been (c) conducted by SSA-based researchers and organisations.

The search process relies mostly on four main sources as depicted below. For more detail on the relevance criteria and search protocol, please refer to “Literature search protocol for the African Education Research Database” (Mitchell and Rose, 2018).





## Countries covered

The AERD is limited by date range, subject area (social science), and author affiliation for 48 countries in SSA: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Eswatini, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

## Limitations

- ➔ Currently, the database does not include studies from South Africa.
- ➔ Language bias toward English as the database searched (Scopus and Web of Science) include only English publications.



A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS  
ON THE STATE OF THE  
**EDUCATION RESEARCH  
FIELD IN AFRICA**

**Published by:** Education Sub Saharan Africa (ESSA) and Southern Hemisphere



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