



NATIONAL EDUCATION RESEARCH AGENDA

KENYA

Overview

The development of Kenya's National Education Research Agenda (NERA) is situated within a broader continental effort to strengthen the relevance, coordination, and impact of education research in Africa. NERA operationalizes the objectives of the Harnessing Education Research for Impact (HERI) Africa initiative, a pan-African collaboration focused on advancing Africa-led, university-based education research that is aligned with societal, policy, and system needs. Within this framework, HERI Africa emphasizes greater coherence in research agendas, stronger connections between evidence generation and decision-making, expanded research productivity, and increased domestic investment in education research. In the Kenyan context, this engagement process highlighted the importance of a nationally shared education research agenda as a catalyst for enhancing relevance and impact.

Against this backdrop, education stakeholders in Kenya initiated the development of NERA to provide a common, country-owned framework that brings together evidence producers and users around shared priorities. The overarching goal of NERA is to focus education research efforts on:



NERA was developed through a synthesis of official policy and strategic documents and consultations with key education stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education (MoE) and its Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies (SAGAs) as well as deans or their representatives from public and private universities running education programs. This process identified priority research areas of interest to evidence users and informed the agenda's initial structure. A consultative validation meeting, hosted by the Commission for University Education (CUE), was subsequently convened to review the draft, address gaps, and strengthen alignment with national priorities. Further validation and refinement took place during the 2025 Education Evidence for Action (EE4A) Conference held at the University of Embu, where education stakeholders¹ reflected on additional research themes, identified short- to medium-term priorities, and outlined conditions required for research to generate meaningful impact.

NERA is designed as a living document for education research producers and users. It will be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect emerging priorities and system developments.

The sections² that follow outline key state actors and evidence users, led by the MoE, and present research focus areas curated from publicly available institutional resources, including strategic plans, policy documents, research reports, and research communication materials.

¹ Over 350 participants from within and outside Kenya, including senior MoE officials, staff from universities, over 50 deans of education faculty/schools, INGO/NGO, and research institutions.

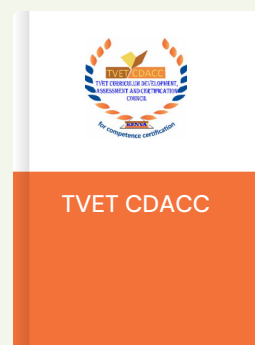
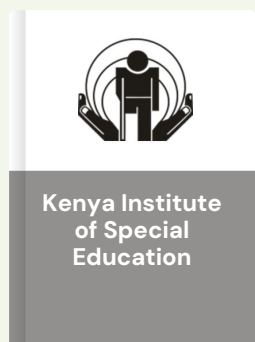
² Themes are not mutually exclusive

Research themes and areas of focus

1

Equity, Inclusion, and Gender Mainstreaming

Evidence–User Institutions Referencing the Theme in Official Documents



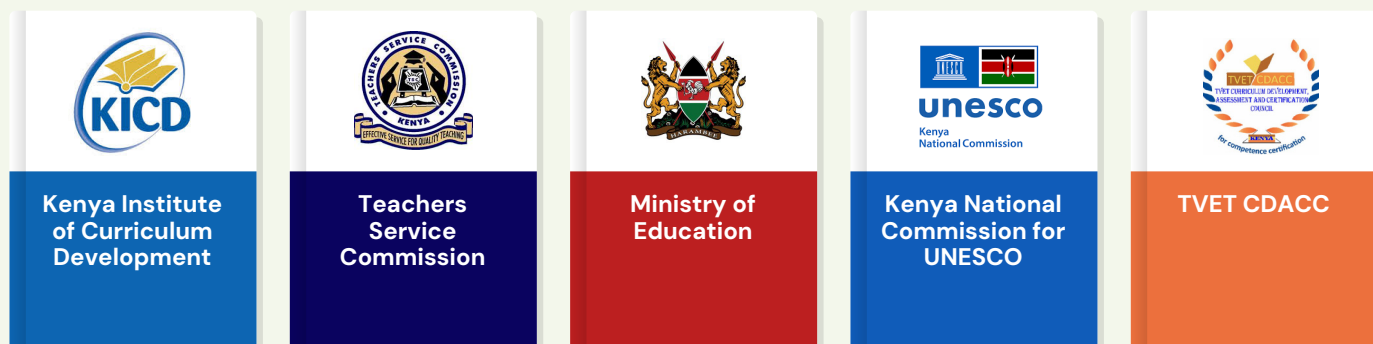
Research Focus Areas

- ✓ Quality education
- ✓ Equity and inclusion of learners with disabilities
- ✓ Accurate data and longitudinal studies on learners with disabilities
- ✓ Gender disparities and gender mainstreaming in education and training
- ✓ Gender and diversity in public universities and TVET institutions
- ✓ Gender and disability mainstreaming in TVET institutions
- ✓ Social and emotional support for teachers and instructors and learners
- ✓ Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and its impact on employment and education
- ✓ Inclusion of marginalized groups in curriculum and teacher education
- ✓ Multi-sectoral approaches to development and education
- ✓ Funding patterns, resource use efficiency, and impact
- ✓ Acceleration, remediation, and catch-up approaches
- ✓ School safety and security (from external and internal sources)
- ✓ Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- ✓ Stage-based curriculum

2

Education Reforms, Pedagogy, and Foundational Learning

Evidence–User Institutions Referencing the Theme in Official Documents



Research Focus Areas

- ✓ Competency-based education and learner-centered approaches, and innovations in teaching and learning
- ✓ Foundational literacy and numeracy
- ✓ Inclusive curriculum development, review, and reform
- ✓ Integration of sustainable development, indigenous knowledge, peace education, and citizenship into the curriculum
- ✓ Incorporation of emerging fields (AI, the digital economy, intellectual property (IP), climate change, renewable energy, ethics, etc.)
- ✓ Evaluation of alternative modes of curriculum implementation
- ✓ Values-based education and core competences
- ✓ Strengthening teacher education and pedagogical skills
- ✓ Current and future skills need – scenario development on skills mix and labour demand
- ✓ Service-based learning, community service learning, and parental empowerment and engagement
- ✓ Teacher management (deployment, incentives and career progression, and effectiveness)

3

Teacher Education and Professional Development

Evidence–User Institutions Referencing the Theme in Official Documents



Research Focus Areas

- ✓ Strengthening teacher education
- ✓ Retooling teachers' and educators' content, pedagogical, and technical skills
- ✓ Impact assessment of the effectiveness of teaching and training practices
- ✓ Social and emotional learning for teachers
- ✓ Generation of theories on development, childhood, and parenting

4

STEM, Technology, Innovation in Education, and Emerging Fields

Evidence–User Institutions Referencing the Theme in Official Documents



Research Focus Areas

- ✓ STEM implementation research (how it is taught, availability of facilities, and implementation challenges)
- ✓ Workforce readiness and experiential learning (internships, apprenticeships), including issues of dual training, dual certification, and dual qualification
- ✓ Innovations in STEM teaching practices and resources
- ✓ Policy and practice (Alignment with reforms, breaking the silos between practitioners and researchers)
- ✓ Artificial Intelligence in education and cultural conservation
- ✓ Commercialization of research and innovations
- ✓ Strengthening researcher capacity (hardware and software)
- ✓ Equity, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI) in STEM
- ✓ STEM teacher development
- ✓ Advanced STEM education
- ✓ Building STEM literacy across the ecosystem
- ✓ Education technology, Artificial Intelligence, and learning

5

Educational Assessment, Certification and Data Systems

Evidence–User Institutions Referencing the Theme in Official Documents



Research Focus Areas

- ✓ Educational assessment and certification
- ✓ Integration of AI into assessment systems
- ✓ Credibility and reliability of assessment and research data
- ✓ Data repositories and information management systems
- ✓ Equalization of qualifications
- ✓ Impact of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) certification
- ✓ Use of assessment data to inform curriculum development and capacity-building initiatives

6

Data, Research, and Impact Evaluation

Evidence–User Institutions Referencing the Theme in Official Documents



Research Focus Areas

- ✓ Accurate and reliable data for policy design and implementation (especially for special needs)
- ✓ Research data management and credibility
- ✓ Longitudinal and impact studies (e.g., on leadership, curriculum, employment outcomes)
- ✓ Establishment of education data repositories and accessibility
- ✓ Indigenous knowledge and African perspectives
- ✓ Futures of Education (what, why, relevance, education in different contexts)
- ✓ Enrolment planning (what to train, which areas, how many to train, period of training, infrastructure required)
- ✓ Research on practice (breaking silos research, practitioners)

7

National Development, Financing, Global Trends, and Policy Alignment

Evidence–User Institutions Referencing the Theme in Official Documents



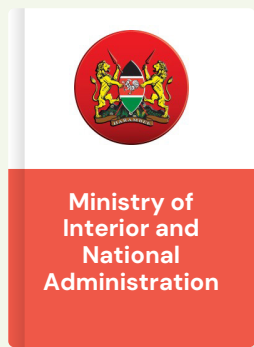
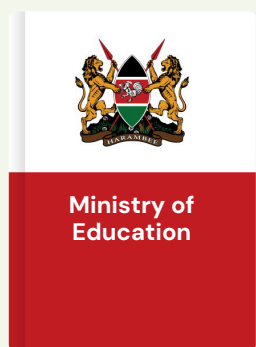
Research Focus Areas

- ✓ Curriculum relevance to national development priorities
- ✓ Youth employment, skills, and transition to work
- ✓ Alignment of curriculum and practices with global trends (e.g., AI, digital economy, public health, blue economy, bioeconomy)
- ✓ Research to inform education policy, governance, accountability, and leadership and management
- ✓ Sustainable and appropriate financing mechanisms for education
- ✓ Effective practices in research dissemination, public opinion, and politics

8

Education in Crises Contexts

Evidence–User Institutions Referencing the Theme in Official Documents



Research Focus Areas

- ✓ Education in emergencies (conflict, natural disasters), displacement, and climate migrants
- ✓ Peace and conflict management education and resilience-building
- ✓ Social and emotional learning and child protection
- ✓ Practices in refugee integration and resettlement (curriculum, language, recognition of prior learning, etc.)

9

Climate Change, Environmental Education, and Sustainability

Evidence–User Institutions Referencing the Theme in Official Documents



Research Focus Areas

- ✓ Climate change awareness and education
- ✓ Integration of climate change adaptation and mitigation in education
- ✓ Institutionalizing climate action in education
- ✓ Sustainable agriculture systems including food and nutrition security
- ✓ Environmental stewardship for waste management
- ✓ Greening concepts and practices –bringing to scale

Areas of education research priority in the short and medium terms



Key Conditions for the Successful Implementation of NERA

Considerations	Elements
Governance, Policy, and Political Will	➔ Secure political goodwill and sustained leadership commitment. ➔ Develop a clear framework for the implementation of research findings. ➔ Align research with policy priorities and ensure reports are formally considered for adoption. ➔ Promote accountability, transparency, and integrity in decision-making. ➔ Anchor policies in local contexts rather than external models.
Stakeholder Engagement and Co-creation	➔ Engage all stakeholders at every stage (design, implementation, evaluation). ➔ Prioritize co-creation of research problems with end users (teachers, communities, policymakers). ➔ Strengthen family and community engagement to support uptake. ➔ Promote multi-sectoral collaboration (government, private sector, NGOs, faith-based groups). ➔ Build synergy and partnerships among diverse actors to avoid duplication and silos.
Evidence Generation, Dissemination, and Uptake	➔ Conduct needs assessments locally rather than replicating externally developed solutions without contextual adaptation. ➔ Ensure timely dissemination of findings and translate them into actionable policy options. ➔ Sensitize users to evidence and build ownership through continuous dialogue. ➔ Establish platforms and repositories to document, update, and share research outputs. ➔ Strengthen advocacy and awareness of reforms and their intended outcomes.
Capacity Building and Leadership	➔ Invest in teacher professional development (continuous in-service training). ➔ Train leaders and policymakers on research use and impact pathways. ➔ Support mentorship for upcoming researchers and engage new voices (e.g., Gen Z). ➔ Build capacity for digital content creation and use of data systems. ➔ Create evidence labs and anchor them in partnerships with governments and universities.
Resources, Funding, and Sustainability	➔ Ensure adequate funding and establish pooled or basket funds to reduce dependency on donors. ➔ Plan for financial sustainability and long-term resourcing of reforms. ➔ Allocate time and resources realistically for change processes. ➔ Mobilize both domestic and external resources while safeguarding independence from external agendas. ➔ Demonstrate tangible benefits and value for money to secure continued investment.
Contextual Relevance and Equity	➔ Prioritize equity, inclusion, and participation of marginalized groups (girls, PWDs, refugees). ➔ Consider population growth, environment, and community realities. ➔ Address the mental health and well-being of teachers and learners. ➔ Promote cultural sensitivity and use of local knowledge systems. ➔ Recognize and scale existing good practices in African education systems.
Monitoring, Learning, and Continuous Improvement	➔ Embed continuous evaluation and adaptation of interventions. ➔ Develop costing of proposed solutions to guide feasibility and prioritization. ➔ Use a triangulated approach (multiple evidence sources) to ensure credibility. ➔ Ensure reports are acted upon, not just produced. ➔ Shift mindsets throughout the education system to embrace research-driven change.

Implementation Strategy

To operationalize the National Education Research Agenda (NERA), a structured and inclusive research approach will be co-developed to ensure coherence, quality, and impact. This approach will adopt a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative, qualitative, and participatory research methods to capture the diverse educational realities across Kenya's unique education ecosystems. Standardized research protocols, ethical guidelines, and data management frameworks will be developed in coordination with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Commission for University Education (CUE). These will guide data collection, analysis, and dissemination, ensuring both comparability and credibility of findings.

Research teams will be formed through collaborative, multi-sectoral processes, including universities, Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies (SAGAs), teacher training institutions, and development partners. Each team will comprise lead researchers, technical experts, data analysts, and community liaisons to ensure inclusivity and contextual relevance. Capacity-building workshops will be conducted to strengthen research skills, digital literacy, and evidence translation.

A central coordination unit within the MoE or at the Commission for University Education will oversee team alignment, monitor progress, and facilitate knowledge sharing through digital repositories and periodic review meetings. This approach will foster synergy, reduce duplication, and ensure that NERA-driven research directly informs education policy, practice, and innovation in Kenya and in similar education ecosystems beyond the country.

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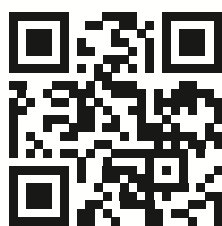
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HERI

AFRICA

HARNESSING EDUCATION RESEARCH FOR IMPACT IN AFRICA



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