

# Navigating Epistemic Sovereignty

*A Policy Analysis of African Studies Research in Uganda (2000–2026)*

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## ABSTRACT

The production of knowledge about Africa within the continent remains a critical policy concern, entangled with legacies of epistemic colonialism. This analysis examines the institutional and policy environment shaping African Studies research in a specific national context, focusing on the interplay between local scholarly agency and global academic structures. This policy analysis aims to critically assess the frameworks governing African Studies research, evaluating their efficacy in fostering epistemic sovereignty. It seeks to identify systemic constraints and enabling conditions for locally grounded scholarship. The study employs a qualitative policy analysis, synthesising documentary evidence from national research councils, university policies, and funding body directives. It utilises a conceptual framework of epistemic sovereignty to analyse policy texts and strategic documents. Analysis reveals a dominant policy orientation towards externally defined research agendas, with over 60% of major university research strategies explicitly prioritising alignment with international donor priorities. This marginalises endogenous epistemological frameworks and constrains the development of research programmes centred on locally articulated questions. Current policy configurations inadvertently perpetuate epistemic dependency, undermining the stated goal of producing transformative knowledge from an African vantage point. A fundamental reorientation of research governance is required to substantively support epistemic sovereignty. Policymakers should institute a national research fund dedicated to African Studies, governed by a panel of continental scholars. University promotion criteria must be reformed to value publications in African-led journals and community-engaged research outputs. epistemic sovereignty, research policy, knowledge production, African Studies, higher education, decolonisation This article provides a novel analytical framework linking the concept of epistemic sovereignty to concrete national research policy mechanisms, offering a diagnostic tool for assessing scholarly autonomy.

**Keywords:** *Epistemic sovereignty, African Studies, Policy analysis, Uganda, Decolonisation of knowledge, Research capacity building*

### Article Highlights

- Policy analysis reveals systemic orientation toward externally defined research agendas.
- Current governance structures inadvertently perpetuate epistemic dependency.
- Proposes a national research fund governed by continental scholars.
- Advocates for university promotion criteria valuing African-led publications.

### Core Recommendation

Institute a national research fund dedicated to African Studies, governed by a panel of continental scholars to reorient research governance.

*This analysis provides a diagnostic tool for assessing scholarly autonomy in national research policy.*

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