

Epistemic Sovereignty and Institutional Capacity

A Diagnostic of African Studies Research in Zimbabwe (2000–2026)

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ABSTRACT

The production of African Studies research within the continent is a critical component of epistemic sovereignty. In the Zimbabwean context, the institutional landscape for such scholarship has undergone significant transformation, yet a systematic analysis of its capacity and output remains absent. This working paper diagnoses the state of African Studies research produced within Zimbabwe. It aims to assess institutional capacity, identify structural constraints, and evaluate the alignment of research outputs with locally defined epistemic priorities. The diagnostic employs a mixed-methods framework, combining a systematic bibliometric analysis of published research with semi-structured interviews with researchers and institutional leads from major universities and research councils. Analysis reveals a pronounced thematic dependency on externally funded governance and conflict studies, which constitute an estimated 60% of sampled output. Conversely, research on indigenous knowledge systems and pre-colonial histories remains markedly under-represented. Institutional capacity is severely hampered by chronic underfunding and a lack of access to contemporary digital archives. The pursuit of epistemic sovereignty is constrained by a research ecosystem shaped by external funding priorities and weakened institutional foundations, which collectively skew the national research agenda away from endogenous intellectual traditions. Key recommendations include establishing a national research fund for African Studies, developing a digital repository for local scholarship, and reforming university curricula to centre methodologies grounded in African epistemes. epistemic sovereignty, research capacity, bibliometrics, Zimbabwe, higher education, knowledge production This paper provides the first systematic, mixed-methods diagnostic of African Studies research production within Zimbabwe, introducing a novel capacity-assessment framework that links bibliometric trends to institutional and funding realities.

Keywords: *Epistemic sovereignty, Institutional capacity, African Studies, Zimbabwe, Research methodology, Post-colonial scholarship, Knowledge production*

Article Highlights

- Diagnostic reveals 60% of sampled research output is thematically dependent on externally funded governance and conflict studies.
- Chronic underfunding and lack of access to digital archives severely hamper institutional capacity.
- Research on indigenous knowledge systems and pre-colonial histories remains markedly under-represented.
- Framework links bibliometric trends directly to institutional and funding realities.

Core Recommendation

Establish a national research fund for African Studies and develop a digital repository for local scholarship to strengthen endogenous research foundations.

This paper provides the first systematic diagnostic of African Studies research production in Zimbabwe.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

This is an abstract-only publication. The complete research paper with full methodology, results, discussion, and references is available upon request.

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