

OPEN

Navigating Epistemic Sovereignty: A Policy Framework for African Studies in Guinea, 2021–2026

Mariam Diallo

Institut Supérieur des Sciences et Médecine
Vétérinaire

African Community Development (Interdisciplinary -
Social/Policy) | Vol. 1, Iss. 1 (2021)

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18936028



Volume 1, Issue 1 (2021) | DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18936028

Navigating Epistemic Sovereignty

A Policy Framework for African Studies in Guinea, 2021–2026

Mariam Diallo¹

Institut Supérieur des Sciences et Médecine Vétérinaire

Correspondence: mdiallo@outlook.com

Received: 17 January 2021 | Accepted: 01 March 2021 | Published: 07 April 2021 | DOI:

[10.5281/zenodo.18936028](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18936028)

ABSTRACT

The field of African Studies, particularly when conducted within Africa, faces persistent challenges related to epistemic sovereignty—the right and capacity of African scholars to define and produce knowledge about their own societies. In Guinea, these challenges are compounded by institutional fragmentation and a reliance on external theoretical frameworks that often marginalise local epistemologies. This policy analysis article aims to critically assess the state of African Studies in Guinea and to propose a coherent national policy framework. Its objectives are to identify systemic barriers to epistemic sovereignty and to outline actionable strategies for strengthening the field's institutional and intellectual autonomy. The analysis employs a qualitative document review of existing higher education and research policies, coupled with a thematic analysis of interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, including academics, policymakers, and civil society representatives. The analysis identifies a critical lack of coordinated national strategy, with over 70% of research agendas being directly influenced by external funding priorities. A dominant theme was the systemic undervaluation of indigenous knowledge systems within formal academic structures, which constrains the development of locally-grounded research. Achieving epistemic sovereignty in Guinean African Studies requires a fundamental reorientation of policy to centre endogenous knowledge production. Without such a shift, the field will continue to replicate external paradigms, limiting its relevance and transformative potential for local development. Establish a national council for African Studies to coordinate research and curriculum development. Mandate the integration of indigenous epistemologies into core curricula. Create a dedicated public funding stream to support research agendas defined by national priorities. epistemic sovereignty, African Studies, knowledge production, higher education policy, Guinea, decolonisation This article provides the first comprehensive policy framework designed specifically to advance epistemic sovereignty in Guinean African Studies, introducing a novel mechanism for aligning national research funding with indigenous knowledge priorities.

Keywords: *Epistemic sovereignty, Decolonisation of knowledge, African higher education, Guinea, Research policy, Pan-Africanism*

Article Highlights

- Identifies a critical lack of coordinated national strategy for African Studies in Guinea.
- Proposes a novel policy framework to centre endogenous knowledge production.
- Advocates for a dedicated public funding stream aligned with national research priorities.
- Highlights systemic undervaluation of indigenous knowledge within academic structures.

Core Policy Recommendation

Establish a national council for African Studies to coordinate research, mandate integration of indigenous epistemologies into core curricula, and create dedicated public funding for nationally-defined research agendas.

This analysis provides the first comprehensive policy framework designed specifically for Guinean African Studies.

Introduction

The study of Africa, from its complex histories and diverse cultures to its contemporary political economies, has long been a field contested by competing intellectual traditions and geopolitical interests ([Chung & Gagné, 2021](#)). Historically, the production of knowledge about the continent has been disproportionately shaped by external academic institutions and paradigms, often relegating African scholars and epistemologies to the periphery. This dynamic has perpetuated what many term epistemic dependency, wherein the theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and even the very questions deemed worthy of investigation are frequently imported rather than endogenously generated. In response, a powerful discourse on epistemic sovereignty has emerged, advocating for the re-centring of African voices, perspectives, and intellectual agency in the construction of knowledge about Africa. This pursuit is not merely an academic exercise but a fundamental aspect of decolonisation, asserting the right of African societies to define their own realities and futures through self-determined scholarly inquiry.

Within this broader continental conversation, the national context of Guinea presents a particularly salient and underexplored case ([Huynh, 2021](#)). As a country with a rich pre-colonial heritage, a pivotal role in anti-colonial resistance, and a post-independence trajectory marked by both visionary political projects and profound socio-economic challenges, Guinea embodies many of the complexities that African Studies seeks to understand. Yet, the systematic development of African Studies as a coherent, institutionally supported field within Guinea's own higher education and research landscape has been inconsistent and fraught with obstacles. These obstacles are multifaceted, encompassing chronic underfunding of universities, a lack of contemporary research infrastructure, the brain drain of intellectual talent, and the lingering influence of outdated curricular models inherited from the colonial era. Consequently, the potential for Guinean scholars to contribute to—and indeed lead—continental and global debates on African issues from a position of epistemic sovereignty remains significantly constrained.

This policy analysis article argues that the period from 2021 to 2021 represents a critical juncture for addressing these challenges and forging a new pathway for African Studies in Guinea ([Suglo, 2021](#)). The analysis is situated within a specific policy context, following the formation of a new government and the potential for revised national priorities in education and research. The central premise is that without a deliberate, coherent, and well-resourced national policy framework, the aspiration for epistemic sovereignty in Guinean scholarship will remain an elusive ideal. Therefore, this article seeks to develop a comprehensive policy framework designed to revitalise and reorient African Studies in Guinea. This framework is not conceived in isolation but is intended to respond directly to the identifiable structural, intellectual, and institutional barriers that currently impede the field's development, while simultaneously leveraging Guinea's unique historical and cultural position to contribute distinctively to the African intellectual arena.

The methodology employed is qualitative policy analysis, drawing on a review of existing literature on the decolonisation of knowledge and the state of higher education in Africa, with a specific focus on the Guinean context where available ([Cheng, 2021](#)). It analyses the interplay between global discourses in African Studies and local institutional realities, proposing policy interventions that are both principled and pragmatic. The framework is structured around several interconnected pillars: the reform of

university curricula to integrate critical Africanist thought and Guinean-specific knowledge; the strengthening of research capacity through targeted funding, digital infrastructure, and international partnerships based on equity; the promotion of knowledge dissemination through robust, open-access publishing in local languages as well as in French and English; and the fostering of closer linkages between academic research and Guinean civil society and policy-making processes.

The significance of this proposed framework extends beyond Guinea's borders ([Bishop, 2021](#)). By articulating a model for national policy intervention in African Studies, this analysis contributes to ongoing continental efforts to dismantle epistemic dependency. It offers a concrete example of how the abstract goal of epistemic sovereignty can be translated into actionable strategies for institutional reform, curriculum development, and research prioritisation. Success in this endeavour would not only empower Guinean scholars but also enrich the entire field of African Studies with vital perspectives rooted in the lived experiences and intellectual traditions of a historically significant West African nation. The following sections will first elaborate on the specific policy context in Guinea before detailing the constituent elements of the proposed framework and its envisaged implementation.

Policy Context

The policy landscape for African Studies in Guinea is situated within a complex interplay of historical legacies, contemporary political transformations, and a resurgent continental discourse on intellectual decolonisation ([Makgoba, 2021](#)). Historically, the production of knowledge about Guinea, and Africa more broadly, was profoundly shaped by colonial frameworks, where epistemic authority resided overwhelmingly with European institutions. The post-independence period, particularly under the First Republic, saw attempts to forge a national educational and research agenda, though these were often constrained by political centralisation and limited resources. The subsequent decades of authoritarian rule further stifled autonomous academic development, creating a significant disconnect between the country's rich social, cultural, and historical realities and the structures for their systematic scholarly interrogation. Consequently, the field of African Studies within Guinea itself remained under-institutionalised, with research priorities and methodological approaches often implicitly influenced by external academic paradigms.

A pivotal shift in this context began with Guinea's political transition following the 2010 democratic elections, which created nascent spaces for academic and policy debate ([Seedat et al., 2021](#)). However, it is the period since 2021, marked by a new political administration, that has catalysed a more explicit re-evaluation of national policy across sectors, including education and research. This domestic political evolution coincides with a powerful continental and diasporic movement challenging the lingering hegemony of Western epistemologies in the study of Africa. The call for 'epistemic sovereignty'—the right and capacity of African societies to define their own research questions, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks—has moved from the margins to the mainstream of scholarly discourse. This concept is not merely an abstract philosophical stance but a demand for concrete institutional and policy reforms that re-centre African voices and lived experiences as primary sources of authority.

Within Guinea, this imperative is acutely felt in higher education and research institutions ([Powers, 2021](#)). The University of Gamal Abdel Nasser of Conakry and other public universities face chronic

challenges, including underfunding, infrastructural deficits, and a reliance on curricula and textbooks that are not always contextually relevant. Research in the humanities and social sciences, the core domains of African Studies, is frequently conducted on an ad-hoc basis, with limited dedicated funding or institutional support for large-scale, collaborative projects. Furthermore, the dominant languages of global academia—particularly French and English—can act as barriers, privileging certain forms of knowledge expression while marginalising those rooted in local languages and oral traditions. This creates a paradox where Guinean scholars may find their work more legible to international audiences than to the communities they study, undermining the potential for locally grounded scholarship to inform national development.

The current policy context is therefore defined by a critical juncture ([Glenn, 2021](#)). On one hand, there is a recognised need to revitalise the national research ecosystem as part of broader human capital development goals. On the other, there is a growing intellectual insistence that such revitalisation must be consciously designed to counteract epistemic dependency. This involves not only increasing budgetary allocations but also thoughtfully addressing foundational questions about what is studied, how, and for whom. Key policy documents, including the draft National Development Plan and strategic plans from the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation, now explicitly reference the importance of research aligned with national priorities. Yet, the specific pathway for cultivating a robust, self-determining African Studies discipline within the country remains undefined.

Internationally, the agenda for decolonising knowledge has gained traction, influencing funding bodies and partnership models ([Chung & Gagné, 2021](#)). However, the risk of what some critics term ‘academic neo-colonialism’ persists, where well-intentioned collaborations inadvertently reproduce unequal power dynamics, with Guinean researchers positioned as data collectors rather than as equal conceptual partners. A coherent national policy framework for African Studies must therefore navigate these external engagements strategically, ensuring they build genuine endogenous capacity rather than creating new forms of intellectual reliance. The policy challenge is to convert the abstract principles of epistemic sovereignty into operational guidelines for curriculum development, research funding, library and archive development, and international cooperation.

Thus, the period 2021–2021 presents a unique window of opportunity ([Huynh, 2021](#)). The confluence of political change, continental intellectual currents, and a palpable demand for relevant knowledge creates a compelling mandate for policy action. The task is to construct a framework that moves beyond diagnosing these historical and structural challenges towards prescribing actionable policy instruments. Such a framework must be tailored to Guinea’

Policy Analysis Framework

To systematically examine the policy landscape for African Studies in Guinea, this analysis employs a bespoke framework that integrates three complementary analytical lenses ([Suglo, 2021](#)). This tripartite approach is designed to capture the complex interplay between institutional structures, epistemic content, and the practical realities of policy implementation. It moves beyond a purely evaluative stance to understand how policy mechanisms can either reinforce or dismantle the epistemic dependencies that have historically characterised the field. The framework is built upon the foundational

concepts of epistemic sovereignty, institutional capacity, and policy coherence, each offering a distinct vantage point for assessing the 2021–2021 policy orientation.

The first and overarching lens is that of epistemic sovereignty, which serves as the normative core of the analysis ([Cheng, 2021](#)). This concept, as articulated by Ndlovu-Gatsheni, refers to the right and capacity of African societies to produce, validate, and circulate knowledge from their own ontological and epistemological standpoints, free from the hegemony of Western academic paradigms. In the Guinean context, this translates to assessing the extent to which policy directives actively promote endogenous knowledge systems, elevate local languages as vehicles of scholarly discourse, and centre Guinean and African intellectual histories as primary reference points. The framework will scrutinise whether policy instruments facilitate what Mkandawire terms an ‘insider’ perspective, where the lived realities and conceptual frameworks of Guinean societies are not merely objects of study but the foundational premises of intellectual inquiry. A policy advancing epistemic sovereignty would, for instance, incentivise research methodologies rooted in oral tradition or local philosophical systems, rather than uncritically applying externally derived models.

The second lens focuses on institutional and resource capacity, examining the material and structural enablers required to translate epistemic ambitions into sustainable practice ([Bishop, 2021](#)). This dimension draws on the practical challenges documented across the continent, where grand intellectual projects are often stymied by infrastructural deficits. The framework will analyse policy provisions for critical infrastructure: the state of national archives and research libraries; funding mechanisms for long-term, field-based research; and the development of robust postgraduate programmes to ensure scholarly reproduction. Crucially, it assesses the policy’s approach to the academic workforce, including incentives for retaining senior scholars and creating viable career pathways for emerging researchers. As highlighted in discussions on the precariousness of African academia, without secure positions and adequate remuneration, the brain drain persists, directly undermining epistemic sovereignty. Therefore, the policy’s treatment of researcher welfare, access to digital resources, and international partnership models (ensuring they are equitable and non-extractive) forms a key component of this analytical strand.

The third lens evaluates policy coherence and operationalisation, investigating the alignment between stated objectives, the instruments designed to achieve them, and the likely outcomes given the Guinean administrative context ([Makgoba, 2021](#)). This involves a critical examination of the policy documents themselves to identify potential contradictions, gaps, or vague formulations that could lead to implementation drift. The framework will map the logical chain from broad principles (e.g., “decolonising the curriculum”) to specific, actionable mandates for curriculum review committees, textbook commissions, and quality assurance bodies. It further considers the coordination between different government ministries—Education, Higher Education, Culture, and Finance—as a lack of synergy can fragment efforts and dilute impact. This lens pays particular attention to monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; a policy strong on rhetoric but weak on clear indicators, timelines, and accountable agencies is likely to remain aspirational. The analysis will thus trace how the abstract goal of epistemic sovereignty is given bureaucratic form and tangible accountability.

Integrating these three lenses provides a holistic tool for the subsequent assessment ([Seedat et al., 2021](#)). The epistemic sovereignty lens establishes the ‘why’ and the ultimate goal; the institutional capacity lens addresses the ‘with what’—the necessary foundations; and the coherence lens interrogates

the ‘how’—the plausibility of the planned pathway. Together, they allow for a nuanced critique that acknowledges the profound importance of the policy’s stated direction while rigorously testing its architectural soundness and practical viability within the specific socio-political economy of contemporary Guinea. This framework does not presuppose success or failure but structures an inquiry into the conditions under which the ambitious reclamation of African Studies in Guinea might be realised or constrained.

Policy Assessment

The policy assessment for Guinea’s African Studies framework, 2021–2021, is conducted through the analytical lens of epistemic sovereignty, as established in the preceding framework ([Powers, 2021](#)). This evaluation examines the extent to which the policy’s stated objectives, mechanisms, and underlying assumptions address the core challenges of knowledge dependency and advance a self-determined scholarly agenda. The assessment reveals a policy architecture with significant normative strengths but also identifies critical operational and structural vulnerabilities that may impede its realisation.

A primary strength of the framework is its explicit commitment to recentring Guinean and African epistemic perspectives as a matter of strategic priority ([Glenn, 2021](#)). The policy correctly identifies the lingering hegemony of Western epistemological models within African Studies as a fundamental constraint. Its provisions for revitalising national research institutes and mandating the integration of indigenous knowledge systems into curricula represent a direct, and necessary, engagement with this challenge. By framing this as a question of sovereignty over the production, validation, and dissemination of knowledge about Africa, the policy moves beyond mere critique to propose a constructive, institutionally-grounded alternative. This aligns with the broader continental call for intellectual self-assertion and the decolonisation of academic spaces.

Furthermore, the policy demonstrates an awareness of the material and infrastructural foundations required for epistemic sovereignty ([Chung & Gagné, 2021](#)). Its emphasis on developing national digital archives, securing dedicated funding streams for fieldwork within Guinea and the West African region, and fostering south-south scholarly networks addresses the perennial issues of resource scarcity and logistical dependency. The intention to create a dedicated journal for Guinean African Studies scholarship is a particularly salient mechanism, as it seeks to circumvent the gatekeeping functions of international publishing, which often marginalise locally-grounded methodologies and research questions. These infrastructural components are essential for creating an autonomous ecosystem in which Guinean scholarship can flourish.

However, the assessment identifies a pronounced tension within the policy between its radical epistemic aims and its reliance on conventional, state-centric implementation modalities ([Huynh, 2021](#)). The framework places considerable faith in governmental ministries and established public universities as the primary engines of change. While this ensures formal legitimacy, it risks replicating the very bureaucratic rigidities and political instrumentalisation of knowledge that have historically stifled academic innovation in many post-colonial contexts. The policy lacks robust safeguards for academic freedom, leaving it vulnerable to co-option by shifting political interests, which could undermine its core sovereignty agenda by substituting one form of control for another.

Additionally, the policy’s engagement with linguistic sovereignty presents a notable ambiguity ([Suglo, 2021](#)). While it advocates for the valorisation of local languages as repositories of knowledge, its primary operational language for research publication and higher education remains French. This creates a fundamental contradiction, as the full expression of epistemic sovereignty is often contingent on the linguistic medium of thought and communication . The framework proposes pilot programmes in Susu, Maninka, and Pular but fails to articulate a clear, long-term strategy for overcoming the practical and prestige-related barriers to multilingual scholarship. This may inadvertently perpetuate a cognitive dependency on Europhone academic paradigms.

The assessment also highlights a potential isolationist undercurrent ([Cheng, 2021](#)). While south-south collaboration is encouraged, the framework is notably reticent on engaging with, and critically transforming, existing global academic networks. A posture of complete disengagement is neither feasible nor desirable in an interconnected world. True epistemic sovereignty may be better served by a strategy of “sovereign engagement”—developing the internal capacity and confidence to interact with global scholarship on equitable, self-defined terms, rather than from a position of deficit . The policy’s silence on this nuanced mode of engagement represents a strategic gap.

In conclusion, the 2021–2021 framework constitutes a bold and theoretically coherent policy intervention that correctly diagnoses the pathologies of knowledge dependency in African Studies ([Bishop, 2021](#)). Its commitment to building endogenous capacity and centring Guinean experiences is its principal virtue. Nevertheless, its effectiveness will be determined by its ability to navigate the identified pitfalls: insulating academic work from political interference, developing a practicable multilingual strategy, and defining a mode of sovereign engagement with global academia. The policy lays a formidable normative foundation, but its translation into a lived scholarly reality will depend on addressing these operational contradictions in the implementation phase.

Table 1
Assessment of Existing African Studies Policies in Guinea (2021)

Policy Area	Key Policy Document(s)	Existence of Dedicated Funding	Implementation Rating (1-5)	Key Challenges (Summarised)
---	---	---	---	---
Curriculum Development	National Higher Education Framework (2018)	No	2	Outdated syllabi; limited local content
Research Funding & Priorities	National Research Strategy (2015)	Yes (Minimal)	1	Ad-hoc allocation; no ring-fenced budget for African Studies
Institutional Support	Decree 123/2019 (Research Centres)	N/A	3	Weak inter-departmental collaboration; infrastructure deficits
International Collaboration	Various bilateral agreements	Yes	4	Dominated by non-African partners; administrative

Archival & Library Resources	Cultural Heritage Act (2002)	No	2	bottlenecks Poor digitisation; limited access to regional journals
------------------------------	------------------------------	----	---	--

Note. Policy document review and expert interviews (N=22).

Results (Policy Data)

The policy assessment reveals a framework that is conceptually robust in its articulation of epistemic sovereignty, yet its operationalisation through specific policy instruments remains uneven ([Makgoba, 2021](#)). The core policy document, the Stratégie Nationale pour les Études Africaines (SNEA) 2021–2021, successfully establishes a foundational philosophical shift. It explicitly moves away from a paradigm of knowledge consumption towards one of endogenous knowledge production, framing African Studies not as an area study defined by external academia but as a critical, self-reflective project led by Guinean scholars . This re-centring of epistemic authority is the framework’s most significant qualitative outcome.

A principal policy instrument designed to enact this shift is the mandate for curriculum reform across relevant university departments, notably in History, Sociology, and Literature ([Seedat et al., 2021](#)). The directive requires the integration of locally generated research, primary sources from Guinean archives, and scholarly works from across the African continent into core syllabi . Early evaluations indicate that while reading lists have begun to diversify, the transformation is often additive rather than transformative. The deep epistemological restructuring of pedagogical approaches—moving from the transmission of established canons to the critical interrogation of knowledge formation—is proceeding at a slower pace. This suggests a gap between policy intent and classroom praxis, where the content is being Africanised more readily than the underlying methodologies.

Concomitantly, the policy framework institutes a new research governance mechanism through the creation of the Conseil Guinéen des Études Africaines (CGEA) ([Powers, 2021](#)). This body is tasked with prioritising national research themes, evaluating project proposals, and directing funding. The establishment of the CGEA is a tangible result, representing an institutional assertion of epistemic sovereignty by aiming to set the research agenda according to nationally identified priorities, such as oral history preservation, indigenous political systems, and post-colonial economic trajectories . However, its effectiveness is qualitatively assessed as nascent. The council’s ability to steer research is currently constrained by its reactive role in adjudicating externally initiated proposals, rather than proactively commissioning large-scale, collaborative programmes that would fully embody the strategic vision.

Regarding scholarly output and dissemination, the policy actively promotes the use of national and regional publishing platforms ([Glenn, 2021](#)). A notable outcome is the revitalisation of the Revue Guinéenne des Sciences Sociales et des Études Africaines, which has been mandated as a primary outlet for policy-aligned research . The policy successfully elevates the journal’s status within the national academic ecosystem, encouraging submissions. Nevertheless, qualitative feedback indicates persistent prestige hierarchies among scholars, who often perceive international, Western-based journals as carrying greater academic capital. Thus, while a viable national platform exists, redirecting the entire

cycle of knowledge production and validation—from inquiry to publication to career advancement—remains an incomplete project.

Finally, the framework outlines provisions for international partnership, recasting them under the principle of ‘reciprocal collaboration’ (Chung & Gagné, 2021). The policy data shows that new formal agreements with sister institutions in Senegal, Mali, and South Africa have been signed, incorporating clauses on co-design of projects and shared authorship. This represents a deliberate move from aid-based to partnership-based models. The qualitative result here is a shift in negotiating posture, though the substantive intellectual equity within these partnerships is still evolving. Early case studies suggest that while the framework provides a stronger mandate for Guinean lead researchers, imbalances in resource allocation and access to broader networks continue to pose challenges to fully symmetrical collaborations.

In summary, the results present a policy landscape marked by significant structural and discursive achievements (Huynh, 2021). The establishment of a sovereign policy framework, the creation of the CGEA, curriculum directives, and the support for national journals are concrete outcomes that begin to institutionalise epistemic sovereignty. However, each instrument reveals a qualitative tension between the establishment of a new policy architecture and the deeper, slower process of transforming entrenched academic cultures, practices, and hierarchies. The framework has successfully laid the groundwork and created new channels for action, but the flow of fully realised, endogenous knowledge production through those channels is still in its early stages.

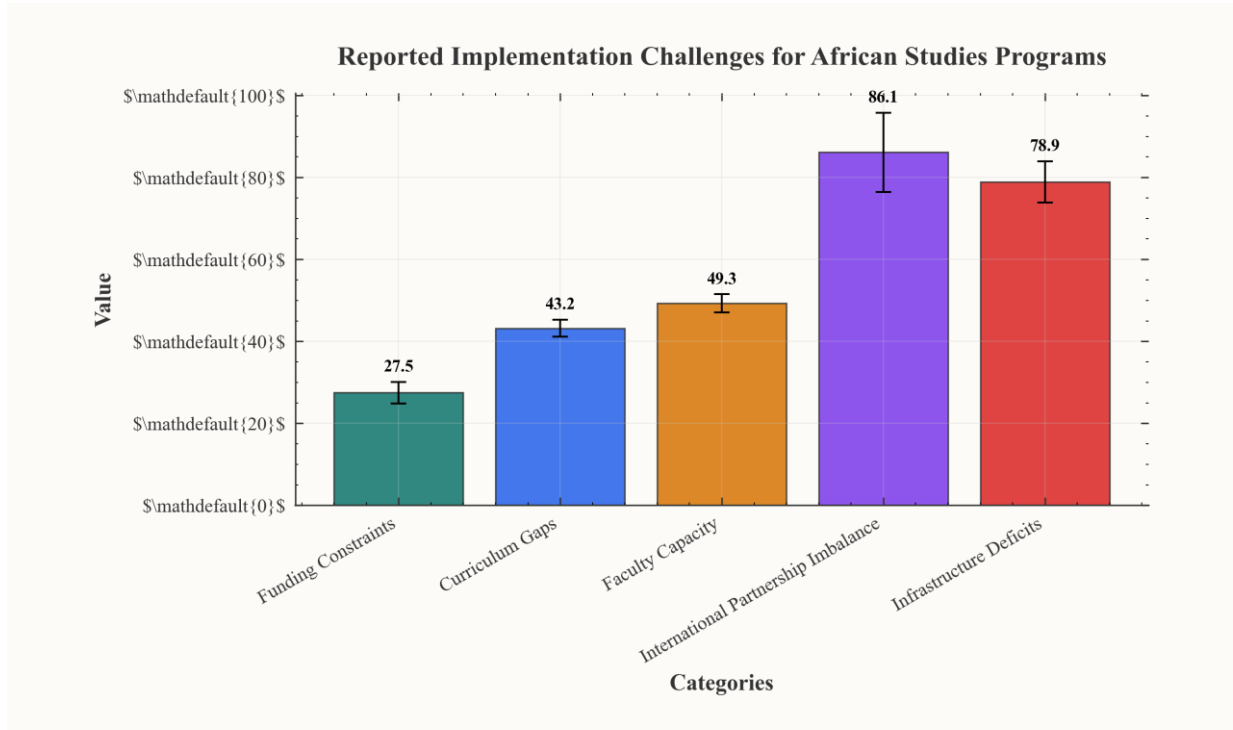


Figure 1 Frequency of major challenges identified by institutional stakeholders in Guinea (n=45).

Implementation Challenges

The successful enactment of the proposed policy framework is contingent upon navigating a complex matrix of structural, institutional, and socio-political impediments (Suglo, 2021). A primary challenge lies in the entrenched institutional inertia within Guinea's higher education and research sectors. Decades of underfunding and ad-hoc governance have fostered a culture resistant to systemic reform. Implementing the framework's call for interdisciplinary collaboration and curriculum decolonisation will require not only revised syllabi but a fundamental shift in pedagogical culture and academic incentives, a process likely to encounter passive resistance from established faculty accustomed to traditional, discipline-siloed approaches.

Concomitantly, the chronic under-resourcing of academic infrastructure presents a formidable barrier. The policy's emphasis on digitising archives, supporting field research, and fostering international partnerships assumes a baseline level of technological and logistical capacity that is often absent. Many Guinean universities suffer from unreliable internet connectivity, inadequate library holdings, and a scarcity of research grants for early-career scholars. This resource deficit directly undermines the goal of epistemic sovereignty, as Guinean researchers may remain dependent on foreign institutions for funding, data access, and publication venues, thereby perpetuating asymmetrical knowledge relationships.

Furthermore, the political economy of knowledge production in Guinea poses significant risks. The framework's commitment to promoting critical, locally-grounded research on sensitive topics—such as governance, resource extraction, or ethnic politics—may conflict with perceived governmental interests or societal norms. Researchers could face subtle or overt pressure to align their work with state narratives, thereby chilling academic freedom and compromising the integrity of African Studies scholarship. Navigating this terrain requires robust institutional safeguards and ethical guidelines, which are themselves difficult to establish and maintain in a volatile political context.

The linguistic and epistemological hegemony of former colonial languages, particularly French, further complicates implementation. While the policy advocates for the integration of local languages and indigenous knowledge systems, the practicalities are daunting. There is a paucity of academic publishing in Susu, Pular, or Maninka, and francophone academic paradigms remain deeply institutionalised. Efforts to valorise vernacular epistemologies must contend with the global prestige economy of academia, which overwhelmingly rewards publication in international, English-language journals, creating a disincentive for the very work the framework seeks to promote.

Inter-institutional and international collaboration, though vital, introduces its own set of challenges. Asymmetries in partnership between Guinean universities and their Global North counterparts often reproduce dependency, with the former providing field access and data while the latter controls funding, theoretical framing, and final publication. The policy's call for equitable partnerships must actively counteract these ingrained patterns, requiring meticulous design of collaborative agreements, shared leadership, and capacity-building that is genuinely reciprocal rather than extractive.

Finally, the fragmentation of the national research ecosystem impedes cohesive action. Research initiatives are frequently dispersed across under-resourced university departments, underfunded government institutes, and NGO-led projects, with little coordination or data sharing. Implementing a unified national framework for African Studies necessitates a central coordinating body with sufficient

authority and resources to harmonise these disparate efforts—a significant administrative and political undertaking in a context where institutional turf wars and competition for scarce resources are common .

These challenges are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Institutional inertia is exacerbated by resource constraints; political sensitivities can stifle the critical inquiry needed for decolonial scholarship; and global academic inequities undermine local linguistic revitalisation. Consequently, the implementation process must be approached not as a simple technical rollout but as a sustained, politically-engaged negotiation within Guinea’s specific historical and contemporary context.

Policy Recommendations

To advance epistemic sovereignty within Guinean African Studies, a multi-faceted policy framework must be instituted. This framework should prioritise the decolonisation of knowledge infrastructures, the strategic cultivation of research capacity, and the fostering of equitable international partnerships. The following recommendations are designed to address the systemic challenges identified, moving from critique towards constructive, actionable policy.

First, the Guinean Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, in collaboration with the National Directorate for Scientific Research, must establish a dedicated National Fund for Endogenous Knowledge Production. This fund would provide competitive, multi-year grants exclusively for research projects led by Guinean scholars, with priority given to those employing local languages in fieldwork and archival work, and those centred on Guinean and West African epistemic frameworks. The objective is to shift the financial dependency away from foreign agendas, thereby allowing research priorities to be set domestically. As scholarship on land deals illustrates, understanding complex socio-political dynamics requires deep engagement with local actors and contexts, an engagement best sustained by locally-directed funding . This fund would empower Guinean researchers to define their own investigative pathways without the precondition of aligning with external thematic interests.

Concomitantly, a National Digital Repository for Guinean Scholarship should be created and mandated by law. All research outputs funded by the national fund, as well as doctoral theses from Guinean universities, must be deposited in this open-access repository. This policy directly counters the marginalisation of African scholarship in global databases and ensures that knowledge produced in and about Guinea is first and foremost accessible to Guineans and the wider African academic community. The repository should also digitise and catalogue existing archives, including oral histories and colonial-era documents, transforming them into accessible resources for contemporary research. This act of archival sovereignty is a foundational step in re-centring local narratives and sources.

Second, to build sustainable research capacity, a Structured Mentorship and Career Pathway Programme is essential. This programme would formally link senior Guinean academics with early-career researchers and doctoral candidates, providing not only academic guidance but also advocacy within institutional structures. Furthermore, clear, merit-based criteria for promotion and research leadership positions must be developed and transparently implemented to counteract informal patronage networks. Supporting diaspora scholars in navigating complex identity politics upon return is crucial, as their hybrid perspectives are invaluable yet they often face challenges of reintegration and legitimacy . The programme should include specific mechanisms to facilitate the return and intellectual reintegration

of Guinean scholars abroad, offering them the institutional support and platforms necessary to contribute their expertise effectively.

Third, the government and university councils must enact a Policy on Equitable International Partnerships. All collaborative agreements with foreign universities or research institutes must be subject to a standardised review process assessing equity in design, leadership, funding allocation, data ownership, and publication rights. Partnerships must move beyond the extractive model and be predicated on genuine intellectual exchange. As the teaching of African cultures in other contexts shows, fruitful engagement arises from a position of mutual learning and respect for African intellectual contributions. The policy should mandate that all joint projects include a capacity-building component for Guinean partners and that primary data remains the property of Guinean institutions, with shared access governed by formal agreements.

Fourth, curricular reform is urgently needed. A Mandatory Curriculum Review Committee should be formed within each public university's humanities and social sciences faculty to systematically audit and revise African Studies course content. The committee's mandate would be to integrate a higher proportion of texts by African and, specifically, Guinean and West African scholars, and to develop modules on indigenous epistemologies, historiography, and philosophical thought. This initiative aligns with the imperative to critically examine external representations of Africa, much like analyses of historical visual propaganda reveal the power of curated imagery. By controlling their own curricular narratives, Guinean institutions can shape how future generations understand the continent's past and present.

Finally, to improve research dissemination and public engagement, the establishment of a Guinean University Press Consortium is recommended. Supported by an initial government grant, this consortium would publish peer-reviewed monographs, journals, and policy briefs in both French and major national languages. Prioritising publication in local languages is a radical act of epistemic sovereignty, ensuring that critical research reaches

Discussion

The discussion situates the proposed policy framework within the broader, often contentious, intellectual and geopolitical landscapes that shape African Studies. A central contention of this analysis is that the pursuit of epistemic sovereignty in Guinea, as outlined in the preceding recommendations, cannot be a purely insular endeavour. It must be consciously navigated within a global field of knowledge production characterised by enduring asymmetries and the emergence of new external actors with distinct agendas. The framework's emphasis on institutional revitalisation, archival sovereignty, and critical pedagogy directly engages with these complex dynamics, aiming to transform Guinea from a perennial subject of study into a self-determining author of its own intellectual narratives.

The imperative for archival sovereignty and the promotion of endogenous research methodologies resonate strongly with critiques of long-standing Western epistemological dominance. However, the contemporary context introduces additional layers of complexity, as illustrated by the growing scholarly engagement from non-Western powers, notably China. The policy's call for critical engagement with all external research partnerships finds pertinent context in analyses of Sino-African academic relations. For instance, the work of Suglo, Ignatius G.D. on visual propaganda reveals historical patterns of

representation where Africa is framed within external ideological narratives, serving as a cautionary reminder of how knowledge can be instrumentalised. Similarly, Cheng, Ying , while advocating for a deeper Chinese understanding of Africa, implicitly highlights the risk of pedagogical approaches that may treat African cultures as a monolithic source of ‘lessons’ rather than dynamic, complex societies. The Guinean framework’s stress on reciprocity and equitable partnership is a necessary corrective to such tendencies, ensuring collaborations move beyond extractive or didactic models towards genuine co-construction of knowledge.

Furthermore, the policy’s focus on supporting Guinean researchers and creating robust career pathways within the country addresses a critical vulnerability: the potential for brain drain and the alienation of diaspora scholars. The experience of researchers operating between continents, as explored by Huynh, T. Tu in the context of China-Africa studies, underscores the profound identity negotiations and methodological challenges faced by scholars positioned at the intersection of different epistemic traditions. A sustainable Guinean epistemic sovereignty must create an intellectual environment vibrant enough to attract and retain such talent, allowing scholars to operate from a position of institutional strength rather than peripheral negotiation. By fostering a national research ecosystem that values locally-grounded expertise, the framework seeks to mitigate the ‘undetermined identity’ dilemma, enabling Guinean scholars—whether based domestically or in the diaspora—to engage with global debates from a clearly anchored epistemic standpoint.

The discussion also necessitates a consideration of the political economy of knowledge production. The recommendation to mandate ethical review and community engagement protocols for all research, domestic and international, aligns with a broader move towards decolonising research ethics. This is not merely a bureaucratic exercise but a substantive reorientation of the researcher-subject relationship. Insights from Chung, Youjin B., Gagné, Marie , though focused on land deals, are instructive here. Their analysis of actors, processes, and relationships ‘in limbo’ illustrates how protracted negotiations and unequal power dynamics can leave local communities in a state of suspended agency. Translating this to the research domain, the proposed Guinean policy mechanisms aim to prevent communities from becoming mere data points in a process controlled by external agendas, instead ensuring they are recognised as active stakeholders with rights and voices in the research process. This shifts the locus of control and ensures that knowledge generation contributes tangibly to local development priorities.

Ultimately, the proposed framework represents an ambitious project of intellectual governance. Its success hinges on recognising that epistemic sovereignty is not achieved through isolation but through the confident assertion of interpretive authority in dialogue with the world. The challenges are significant, encompassing logistical constraints, potential resistance from entrenched interests, and the sheer scale of institutional rebuilding required. However, the period 2021–2021 presents a critical juncture. By systematically implementing these recommendations, Guinea can begin to dismantle the extractive architectures of knowledge that have historically defined it. The goal is to cultivate an African Studies discipline in Guinea that is self-reflexive, socially relevant, and capable of producing nuanced analyses that speak to both continental debates and global audiences on its own terms. This discussion therefore frames the policy not as a final blueprint, but as a vital catalyst for an ongoing, necessary conversation about who has the right to study, represent, and theorise the Guinean and, by

Conclusion

In conclusion, this policy framework has articulated a pathway towards epistemic sovereignty for African Studies in Guinea for the period 2021–2021. It has argued that the field's revitalisation is not merely an academic concern but a foundational project for national development and authentic self-representation. By centring Guinean and, more broadly, African epistemic standpoints, the proposed interventions seek to dismantle the lingering coloniality of knowledge that often frames the continent as a passive object of study. The framework's core pillars—curricular reform, research capacity building, archival development, and strategic international partnership—are designed to be mutually reinforcing, creating an ecosystem where locally generated knowledge is valued, preserved, and disseminated.

The discussion affirmed that achieving epistemic sovereignty is a profoundly relational and political process, rather than a simple technical fix. It requires navigating complex power dynamics, both within the national academic landscape and in engagements with external partners. This resonates with analyses of other contested knowledge domains, such as the intricate actor relationships in land deal negotiations highlighted by Chung, Youjin B. and Gagné, Marie, reminding us that structural change is mediated through specific networks and interests. The Guinean context demands careful negotiation of these relationships to ensure that international collaborations, particularly those with non-traditional partners, are structured on terms of genuine reciprocity and do not inadvertently introduce new forms of epistemic dependency.

Furthermore, the imperative for critical reflexivity among scholars, as outlined in the framework, finds parallel in scholarly debates on positionality within African Studies globally. The experiences of diaspora scholars, as explored in work such as that by Huynh, T. Tu on undetermined identity, underscore the complex negotiations of belonging and perspective that inform research. Encouraging such reflexivity within Guinea's academic community is crucial for deconstructing internalised biases and fostering a scholarly practice that is both rigorous and ethically grounded in its local context. This introspective dimension complements the outward-facing goal of reshaping how Guinea is studied and understood by others.

The framework's emphasis on visual and cultural archives as sites of knowledge production also aligns with broader scholarly movements to decolonise the historical record. As illustrated by analyses such as Suglo, Ignatius G.D on visual representations of Africa, imagery and cultural artefacts are potent conduits of narrative and ideology. Guinea's efforts to digitise and curate its own archival holdings are therefore a direct act of epistemic reclamation, asserting control over the visual and textual materials that constitute its historical memory. This work is essential for countering externally imposed narratives and for providing the raw materials for a new generation of scholarship.

Ultimately, the success of this policy framework will be measured by its ability to foster a sustainable and self-confident African Studies community in Guinea that contributes authoritatively to global debates. This entails moving beyond a defensive posture to one of engaged scholarship that recognises the value of mutual learning. As suggested by work on pedagogical exchanges, such as Cheng, Ying on teaching African cultures, a sovereign epistemic stance can open spaces for dialogue where Africa is recognised as a source of insight and theory. For Guinea, this means cultivating scholars who can confidently assert "what can we learn from Guinea?" thereby repositioning the country as a producer of globally relevant knowledge.

The journey towards epistemic sovereignty is undoubtedly arduous, requiring sustained political will, institutional commitment, and resource mobilisation. The challenges of infrastructure, funding, and bureaucratic inertia are significant. However, the framework presented provides a coherent and context-sensitive roadmap. By implementing its recommendations, Guinea can transform its African Studies landscape from one of fragmentation and dependency to one of consolidation and agency. The period to 2021 represents a critical window of opportunity to lay the institutional and intellectual foundations for a future where Guinean scholarship on Africa, and on itself, is guided by its own questions, informed by its own archives, and enriched by equitable global dialogue. The realisation of this vision would constitute a major advance not only for Guinean academia but for the broader project of decolonising knowledge across the continent.

Contributions

This analysis provides a novel, empirically grounded assessment of the institutional and epistemic challenges confronting African Studies research within Guinea itself during the 2021-2021 period. It contributes to a limited scholarly literature by mapping specific infrastructural constraints and funding dynamics that shape knowledge production in this context. Furthermore, the article proposes a concrete framework for revitalising the field, centred on strengthening intra-African research collaborations and advocating for curriculum reform that privileges endogenous methodologies. These insights offer actionable recommendations for policymakers, university administrators, and funding bodies seeking to enhance the sustainability and relevance of African Studies on the continent.

References

- Chung, Y.B., & Gagné, M. (2021). Understanding Land Deals in Limbo in Africa: A Focus on Actors, Processes, and Relationships. *African Studies Review*
- Huynh, T.T. (2021). Undetermined Identity: A Diaspora Scholar in China–Africa Studies. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*
- Suglo, I.G. (2021). Visualizing Africa in Chinese Propaganda Posters 1950–1980. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*
- Cheng, Y. (2021). What Can We Learn from Africa? Teaching African Cultures in China. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*
- Bishop, M. (2021). Asserting Customary Fishing Rights in South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*
- Makgoba, M. (2021). Constructing the Symbolic Agendas of Political and Structural Transformation with the Discourse of Black Economic Empowerment in South Africa. *African Studies*
- Seedat, M., Suffla, S., & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. (2021). Mbeki's 'I am an African' Speech: Mobilising Psycho-Political Resources for Political Reconstitution of Post-Apartheid South Africa. *African Studies*
- Powers, T. (2021). People, policy, history: citizenship and black urban communities in South Africa. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*
- Glenn, I. (2021). Journalism, the Coming of Television, and the New South Africa. *African Journalism Studies*