



UNLOCKING DATA TO TELL THE STORY OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Imagine you are working in the education ministry in Uganda and you want to understand how the education system can contribute to the employability of young women. You can find a few academic articles that look relevant but sit behind a paywall and a high-level report from a consulting firm, none of which answer the exact question you want to ask. But you know the data could provide crucial insights if analysed with your priorities in mind.

This problem is replicated across the continent in ministries, schools, colleges and investor boardrooms, despite the explosion in research and evaluation in education over the last 15 years.

Raw data sets languish on the hard drives of academics, consultants and funders. In the best case scenario they are rigorously analysed and published in an open-access journal but frequently they will be used to develop private reports that benefit only a paying client.

WHY THIS MATTERS

There are a few cross-country examples of education data being openly shared, like the case of the [People's Action for Learning \(PAL\) Network](#). Several citizen-led assessments have been conducted across seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa. But there have been minimal efforts of, for instance, combining Uwezo (East Africa) and SACMEQ data, or Bekuungo (Mali) and PASEC data, to tell a better story of education in each of the countries.

In regions where government data is limited, unlocking the patchwork of data collected for baseline evaluations, landscaping studies and feasibility assessments would give decision-makers a fuller picture of the state of education in their countries.

Giving scholars in these regions access to this data will increase the generation of local knowledge, fitting local demands that we know policymakers are most keen for. Making data open access allows African universities to grow local capacity for analysis where primary data collection is often beyond their resources. For this data to have an impact we must also deliberately target pathways from analysis to impact, from academics, civil society, and the private sector, through to the end user.

WHERE ARE WE AND WHO CAN WE GET TO?

This is underlined by analysis of secondary data use in the [African Education Research Database \(AERD\)](#). The analysis revealed that just 3% of over 3,500 publications are using secondary data. The situation is particularly dire outside of primary and secondary education,

with just two publications in the AERD using secondary data related to Early Childhood Development and none at all for Technical, Vocational Education and Training.

Since July 2020, [ESSA](#), [ZiziAfrique](#) and [EdTech Hub](#) have been bringing together small groups of influencers with an interest in increasing data access and use for education in Africa. These include funders, academics, national statistics offices and policy-makers. The workshops have built real enthusiasm to use our collective influence to increase access to, and use of, education data. At the same time there is a recognition that the problem is complex and that work is needed also increasing capacities to collect, analyse and use data.

Based on feedback from the workshops we plan to build a community of practice for increasing access to and use of education data in Africa. The purpose of the community of practice will initially be to share knowledge and build a network so that members learn from each other's experiences as well as share frameworks, lessons, tools, and opportunities. Over time we aim to foster collaborations that will move from analysis to impact.

[ESSA](#), [ZiziAfrique](#) and [EdTech Hub](#) are delighted to partner with [Decent Jobs for Youth](#) to bring this conversation to a new group of stakeholders, in particular those who are look across the transition from education into work.

MEETING AIMS

We would like to take the opportunity of this partnership with Decent Jobs for Youth to focus on data relating to youth skills and employability. The aim of this virtual meeting is to understand how we can work together to unlock data that will help partners to take concrete steps to support young people in the transition from education into work. The objectives of the session are to:

- Present findings from previous meetings and share strategies for increasing access to education data.
- Share the experiences of attendees on challenges and successes in increasing access to data
- Identify meaningful actions that we can take to increase access to education data
- Define concrete action for using education data to support youth employment stakeholders in the design and implementation evidence-based policies and programmes
- Explore links to other initiatives

AGENDA

1:00 p.m. - 1:05 p.m. Welcome

1:05 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. Presentation on the challenge of data access and use in the area of youth skills and employability

- 1:15 p.m. - 1:55 p.m. Breakout groups to explore data access specifically in the area of youth skills and employability
- 1:55 p.m. - 1:20 p.m. Report back highlighting concrete actions that attendees can make to improve access to and use of data relating to youth skills and employability
- 2:20 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. Next Steps
- 2:30 p.m. Closing

QUESTIONS FOR BREAKOUT GROUPS

- What does your organization do at the moment to increase access to and use of data?
- What data sets have you used to inform your work?
- What are the most significant data gaps?
- What steps can we take to increase access to and use of priority data?

The workshop will be structured around small group discussions to enable in-depth conversation and the development of concrete actions and recommendations.

The output from this workshop will be written up and shared with participants. It will also feed into the design of the community of practice and will contribute to an action plan to increase data availability and use in education across sub-Saharan Africa.