

Fellows appointed to promote evidence-based decision-making in education policy in Africa

The Africa Fellows in Education Programme aims to improve education decision-making through supporting fellows to develop and advocate for quality research that is locally relevant and robust, putting evidence at the heart of education policy in Africa.

The Global Education Analytics Institute (GEAI), in collaboration with the Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP), has launched a research and policy development fellowship designed to build local capacity and improve education decision-making across sub-Saharan Africa. Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, PEP has a long history of building capacity for policy analysis in communities facing educational and economic inequalities. Supported by funding from the Yidan Prize, the fellowship is the first programme of the newly established GEAI and will be led by its executive director, Ramaele Moshoeshoe.

The programme will initially support a cohort of four fellows in 2023, with eight more to follow in 2024. All fellows will complete a two-year fellowship, gaining relevant experiences in education policy research and analysis, as well as opportunities to network with international researchers and policy advisers.

“Africa faces a learning crisis and has limited local capacity to generate cutting-edge education policy research and analysis to guide policymakers. The Africa Fellows in Education Programme aims to address this crisis; It provides a unique opportunity for young Africa-based scholars and education policy analysts to hone their skills, be part of a network of highly competent researchers and policy advocates, and improve education decision-making in the continent,” Ramaele Moshoeshoe.

The programme's inaugural fellows include four distinguished researchers in the field of development economics: Amadou Jallow of Gambia, Heleen Hofmeyr of South Africa, Jaah Mkupete of Tanzania, and Yselle Flora Malah Kuete of Cameroon.



L to R: Amadou Jallow (Gambia), Heleen Hofmeyr (South Africa), Jaah Mkupete (Tanzania) and Yselle Flora Malah Kuete (Cameroon). Images supplied

Amadou Jallow, an economics lecturer and unit head of the economic programme at University of The Gambia, specializes in research on development economics, with a focus on migration, education, agricultural policies, and impact evaluations in developing countries.

Heleen Hofmeyr, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Economics Department at Stellenbosch University, has led numerous large-scale research projects in South Africa. Her work focuses on the role of socio-emotional skills in education, with a particular interest in supporting vulnerable children.

Jaah Mkupete, a development economist and affiliated lecturer at University of Dar-es-Salaam, Mkwawa University College of Education, specializes in studying human capital accumulation, with a focus on health and education. His research also seeks to understand the interaction between climate change, food systems, gender, and nutrition in sub-Saharan Africa.

Yselle Flora Malah Kuete, a researcher and lecturer at University of Yaoundé II in Cameroon, has collaborated with international organizations to improve primary education systems in sub-Saharan Africa. Her projects analyze factors affecting elementary school performance, and study regional and gender disparities in education quality.

Joining a global network of experts, the fellows will become strong advocates for improving schools and education systems in their respective countries.



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Advocating for a localised, evidence-based approach to education decision-making

Professor Eric A. Hanushek, 2021 Yidan Prize for Education Research Laureate, used his Yidan Prize project funds to launch GEAI and support the programme from January 2023 to December 2025.

“Education policy is closely linked to the future economic well-being of the country because a country’s growth depends on the skills of its population. The Africa Fellows in Education Programme is designed to foster a network of people who can lead the transformation of the schools by fostering robust, evidence-based decision-making in education,” said Professor Eric Hanushek.

The Africa Fellows in Education Programme will build a group of Africa-based leaders capable of developing evidence and shaping educational policies that are relevant to their respective countries. Starting in sub-Saharan Africa, GEAI hopes to foster a wider network of local experts across the continent.

The fellows will be trained to identify and produce high-quality research that can be used to improve education decision-making in local contexts. They will also have the opportunity to conduct outreach to policymakers and civil society actors to advocate for sound, evidence-based local policies.

Edward Ma, Secretary-General of Yidan Prize Foundation, said: “The Yidan Prize Foundation is delighted to support the Africa Fellows in Education Programme. Quality education underpins global development, and quality evidence leads to sound policy and systems. Eric, Ramaele, and the PEP team are collaborating to nurture a network of highly skilled researchers in Africa.”

Building local capacity through mentorship, training, and networking opportunities

During the two-year research and policy development fellowship, fellows will develop their own research projects under supervision and mentorship from advisers at PEP and Stanford University.

The first phase of the programme will include international training and networking opportunities, including a visit to Munich for the annual CESifo Economics of Education conference, and meeting with officials at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in Paris. Fellows will also travel to the US to meet with researchers at Stanford University and attend the annual meeting of the Association for Education Finance and Policy.

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