No Longer Overlooked and Undervalued? The Evolving Dynamics of Endogenous Educational Research in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Multilateral donors like the World Bank and bilateral agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the British Department for International Development exert a great deal of influence in international educational development — particularly in sub-Saharan Africa — both in the programs they fund and the types of research they engage in. In this article, Richard Maclure investigates educational research in Africa and juxtaposes research done by large, exogenous, Western, results-oriented organizations with research performed by smaller, endogenous, local researchers aided by local research networks. Maclure argues convincingly that research that falls into the exogenous "donor-control" paradigm far too often is irrelevant to the African educational policy context and does little to develop local research capacity. The cases of two African research networks — the Educational Research Network of West and Central Africa and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa — are presented as exemplars of organizations that promote an alternative type of research that is endogenous, relevant to policy and the process of policymaking, and controlled by Africans. Maclure concludes with a call for increased support for and development of these types of networks, and for the development of the long-term solution to educational research in Africa — the university.

Obstacles to the Development of Endogenous African Educational Research

During the two decades following the success of independence movements across much of the African continent in the early 1960s, great hopes were invested in the rapid expansion of formal education systems. Yet since the end of the 1980s, education throughout sub-Saharan Africa has been persistently plagued by high rates of attrition, low achievement levels, shortfalls in infrastructure and learning materials, indications of poor teaching and low teacher morale, and disjunctions between school-based learning and subsequent job opportunities (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2005). While the provision of universal access to basic education remains an as yet unattained imperative in most African countries, there is clearly also an urgent need to identify methods and strategies that will engender sweeping improvements in educational quality, relevance, and cost-effectiveness. It is now widely acknowledged that for this to occur, extensive ongoing programs of research are needed to shed light on the complexities of educational problems and to formulate appropriate policies of educational reform.

In many respects, existing knowledge of education systems and processes in sub-Saharan Africa is considerable. Yet most research published on education in sub-Saharan Africa has been produced by scholars and consultants who are employed in the universities, think tanks, and aid agencies of Northern countries.[1] Moreover, until quite recently, extensive public dissemination of endogenous educational research — studies that have been conducted by African researchers who live and work in their countries of origin — has been relatively scarce. This has been inevitable to some extent in light of the longstanding economic and sociopolitical travails that have afflicted African countries, and the vast technological and information disparities that exist between Northern countries and those of sub-Saharan Africa.

As elsewhere in the world, universities in Africa are ostensibly the main institutional foundations of autonomous national research. Yet despite the training and knowledge of their professorates, most university departments relegate independent scholarly research to a peripheral activity. The lack of financial and technical resources, the scarcity of journal subscriptions and recent books, and large student enrollments that necessitate heavy teaching loads have severely hampered the development and sustainability of endogenous research capacities within sub-Saharan African systems of higher education (Stren, 2001). With national universities generally overwhelmed by a combination of limited financial resources and steady growth in enrollment, scientific output from the whole of sub-Saharan Africa has been estimated at less than 1 percent of the world's output (International Development Research Centre/Association of Universities & Colleges of Canada [IDRC/AUCC], 2003). As a way to compensate, universities have customarily allowed

for the creation of quasi-independent research centers that have attracted financial support from foreign backers and collaborative ties with Northern Africanist scholars. Institutes such as the Research Consultancy Bureau at Cape Coast University in Ghana and the Centre for Basic Research in Uganda have functioned essentially as consultancy firms, generating income for the universities that house them and complementing the relatively low university salaries of professors affiliated to these centers (Association for the Development of Education in Africa [ADEA], 1998). In fact, since adequate financial input for research is generally available through Northern-funded baseline studies and project evaluations, private research and evaluation consultancy groups have proliferated in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet as with all contracted research, the parameters of inquiry are defined by the contracting organizations, most of which are foreign to Africa. It is thus difficult for many otherwise well-trained researchers to establish their own independent research programs when they are understandably drawn to opportunity structures that offer attractive facilities and salaries (Association of African Universities & World Bank, 1997).

In light of the need to monitor and evaluate an array of processes and outcomes, specialized units have generally been established within African ministries of education to gather, analyze, and report on data pertaining to educational effectiveness and quality. Yet these ministries have rarely made effective use of the information they gather. As attested to in a recent comprehensive evaluation of aid to basic education, these ministries' failure to "link research to action is the most significant problem in the use of monitoring and evaluation in support of basic education" (Freeman & Faure, 2003, p. 51). A combination of factors, including staunch resistance to change and organizational cultures that impede the use of evaluative information, have rendered information gathering a frequently redundant and ineffective ministry exercise. Given these political, financial, and ideological hindrances to the development of independent research, concerns have often been expressed that African educational research has been dislocated from national contexts and has become largely the prerogative of researchers and institutions situated in North America and Europe.

Nevertheless, despite the weakness of African universities and the general disinterest in the practical merits of research and evaluation, endogenous African educational research has been resilient and voluminous in many respects. Until recently, however, much of it was conducted in relative obscurity and appeared only in unpublished manuscripts or reports that had limited readerships, and thus was usually quickly forgotten. This "subterranean" reality of African educational research became clear to me personally in the early 1990s while I was working on the synthesis of a series of national inventories of educational research sponsored by the Educational Research Network of West and Central Africa (ERNWACA). To the delight of those involved, many unpublished reports and manuscripts were unearthed by the inventory exercise.

Yet the very fact that so much research had languished unused clearly signaled that endogenous African educational research was generally being overlooked and undervalued by educational policymakers and international scholars (Maclure, 1997; Namuddu & Tapsoba, 1993). This in turn generated questions about the degree to which autonomous national research capacities could be developed and maintained, and whether independent educational research conducted by African scholars could influence African educational policymaking and reform.

The relationship between endogenous research and national educational policymaking in fact emerged as a central theme of the inventory synthesis report, which concluded by outlining three main recommendations to enhance the quality and visibility of African educational research: (a) that substantial support be directed to strengthen educational research capacities, largely through training and the establishment of partnerships among African scholars; (b) that concerted efforts be made to disseminate nationally conducted research through as many channels as possible — publications, databases, newsletters, enhanced library resources; and (c) that links and regular forums for communication be established between African educational researchers and educational policymakers (Maclure, 1997). These were challenging objectives, particularly in view of the entrenched fiscal and administrative constraints that had weakened African governments and university systems. It was clear, therefore, that achieving these ends would require substantial external financial and technical assistance.

Now, a decade later, with African governments and international development agencies galvanized by the Millennium Development Goal[2] of ensuring that all children complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015 (United Nations, 2000), and with the empirical knowledge base of African education an undoubtedly significant factor in shaping national policies and programs, it is useful to reexamine the current state of endogenous African educational research and to assess whether or not it continues to be overlooked and undervalued. To some extent this is a vastly presumptuous task. Given the enormous political, linguistic, and demographic diversity of sub-Saharan Africa and the breadth of education as a multidisciplinary field that engages many institutions and scores of researchers, it is next to impossible to undertake an in-depth and comprehensive assessment of the status of African educational research. Furthermore, given the continued heavy dependence of African educational research on foreign funding, there may be questions about the degree to which African educational research can be fully independent and reflective of African sensibilities and concerns.

Nevertheless, in this essay, I will attempt to piece together an overview of the evolving state of endogenous African educational research by examining two modalities of educational research, one that is characterized by the direct control of international financial and technical assistance agencies (which I will refer to more simply as donor agencies), and another that is conducted

largely under the auspices of formally established research networks that promote a praxis approach whereby research is oriented toward fostering policy-related reflection and dialogue. As I will show, despite diverse constraints and limitations, African researchers, by using both approaches, have been able to make considerable advances in contributing to the available knowledge base of African education and in participating more effectively in discourses of educational policymaking.

The Donor-Control Approach: Research as Product

Over the last two decades, following the corrosive effects of structural adjustment policies and the advent of the Education For All movement catalyzed by the 1990 Jomtien Conference,[3] a number of multilateral donor agencies — notably the World Bank and UNICEF — and bilateral donors — including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) — have sought to transform themselves from functioning solely as sources of financial and material aid into purveyors of policy advice and catalysts of educational reforms in sub-Saharan Africa (King & Buchert, 1999; McGinn, 2000; Samoff, 1999). Consequently, in order to ensure the credibility of their advisory functions, they have become keenly attuned to the value of evidence-based research and the content and dissemination of ideas that impinge directly on policies of African education. Given their inevitable concerns about the efficacy and outcomes of their own programs of assistance to education, these organizations have become major producers as well as consumers of research on African education, with much of their attention centered on issues closely related to their own program mandates (Buchert, 1998; Samoff & Stromquist, 2001). By and large, the objectives of donor-controlled inquiries are similar: to shed light on specific aspects or problems of education and to generate recommended courses of action for donor program staff and for host country counterparts (Reimers & McGinn, 1997).

   To achieve these ends expeditiously, donors generally rely on a vast pool of education specialists, many of them African nationals, most of them hired on a contractual basis. While Africans are periodically designated as project leaders, they generally are appointed as coresearchers who work with or under the direction of Northern experts. Regardless of origin, however, education specialists who are involved in donor-controlled research and evaluation projects customarily share similar technical and disciplinary backgrounds. They usually hold graduate university degrees, often from Northern universities, and most have had previous and sometimes longstanding affiliation with donor agencies. Consequently, when collaborating on donor-controlled projects, they are generally bound together by mutual intellectual and professional perspectives that enable them to communicate easily and to work well together (Samoff, 1999).

With ample resources and expertise at their disposal, the World Bank and other major donors now wield substantial influence over the language and forms of inquiry and the overall orientation of applied educational research in most African countries. Although varying widely in terms of scope and quality, donor-controlled educational research has tended to generate or reinforce several common themes:

- Continued emphasis on the expansion of primary school placements and increased enrollment of girls, rural children, and other disadvantaged social groups (Tietjen, 1997; UNICEF, 2002; World Bank, 2000);
- Improved cost-effectiveness of education through more efficient fiscal and administrative capacities, and through the introduction of alternative "delivery" modalities, such as double-shift teaching and multigrade classrooms (Mattimore, Verspoor, & Watt, 2001; World Bank, 1999);
- Enhanced preservice and in-service teacher training as a way to foster improvements in the quality of classroom instruction and learning (Fiske, 1998; Gaynor, 1998; Perraton, Robinson, & Creed, 2001);
- Decentralized educational administration and strengthened local administrative systems and practices (Bray, 1996; Saunders, Riley, Craig, Poston, & Flynn, 2000; UNESCO, 2000; Watt, 2001);
- Combined support for and regulation of educational privatization and the establishment of autonomously managed community schools (Sosale, 2000; Watt, 2001; World Bank, 1999); and
- Enhanced donor coordination and emphasis on sectorwide strategies of educational assistance (Buchert, 1995; Freeman & Faure, 2003; Riddell, 2001).

While it is impossible to offer any comparative insights into the nature and content of donor-controlled research on these various issues, there is nonetheless a general tendency to focus on factors that are crucial to the continued expansion and improved efficiency of formal schooling. This is in line with a common donor agenda of specifying problems and prescribing solutions that generally include proposed system changes and external injections of financial and technical assistance. Yet this approach has attracted considerable criticism, particularly from Northern scholars (Reimers & McGinn, 1997; Samoff & Stromquist, 2001; Welch, 1998). As Samoff (1999) has argued, this approach to educational research is akin to a medical metaphor of inquiry in which education, particularly schooling, is regarded as a constellation of variables and outcomes that can be assessed through positivist methods determined in Northern institutional contexts. Because of this prescriptive approach, there rarely are indications of donor-controlled studies examining or questioning fundamental assumptions that relate to the purposes of education, to the cultural and linguistic dimensions of schooling, or to the social dynamics of classroom learning and interaction (Masemann, 1999; Welch, 1998).

At the heart of this medicalized approach to research is a power dynamic. Given the active involvement of donor agencies in the processes of knowledge

accumulation and dissemination, and the corresponding dependence of African educational systems on foreign aid, agency-controlled research is essentially a top-down process (McNeely, 1995). Likewise, most of the principal authors of donor-controlled research that has focused on education in sub-Saharan Africa are non-Africans who are employed permanently in Northern institutions (Freeman & Faure, 2003). In line with the prescriptive research framework of the donor-control approach, the findings of donor agency studies are rarely subjected to extensive discussion outside of agency confines (Buchert, 1998). As such, African educational policymakers and other educational stakeholders — lower-level ministry bureaucrats, principals, teachers, and parents' associations — are generally regarded as recipients of validated knowledge that will facilitate the formulation and implementation of donor-proposed policy initiatives and reforms (Brock-Utne, 1995).

While donor agencies are frequently quite ready to embrace the language of stakeholder consultation and participation (Lavergne, 2004), and while there is clear indication of a growing African presence in donor-sponsored research and evaluation projects (even though there are still relatively few Africans functioning as principal researchers on these projects), ironically, in many instances the very *control* that donor agencies generally exercise over much of the process of knowledge production in Africa tends to hinder their effectiveness in influencing the perceptions and practices of those who work within education systems (Meier, 1999; Reimers & McGinn, 1997). Indeed, whether donor-agency studies have fostered major improvements in African education systems is a moot point (Freeman & Faure, 2003). For example, the goal of gender parity, particularly as it relates to the retention of girls in school and the quality of female learning, has proven elusive, as have questions about the long-term financial sustainability of expanding school systems and the faulty link between education and subsequent employment opportunities for the growing numbers of those leaving school. More recently, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has decimated the education profession in a number of southern African countries and left millions of children without parental support, has raised questions about alternative modalities of educational delivery that donor-directed studies have only recently begun to broach (World Bank, 2002).

Since the resolution of many abiding and looming problems depends substantially on coordinated actions by a range of educational stakeholders, there is growing acknowledgment of the need for a more symbiotic connection between researchers and policymakers, and for opportunities that enable stakeholders to share in the analysis of problems that they regularly confront (Reimers & McGinn, 1997). This has given rise to an alternative approach to endogenous African research, one that constitutes a combination of professional networking aiming to strengthen connections among African researchers and policymakers and the pursuit of research for purposes of collaborative reflection and policy-oriented dialogue. As I shall now discuss, it is this juxtaposition of networking and praxis-oriented research that appears to be aug-

menting the profile of endogenous African educational research as an increasingly significant factor in educational policy dialogue.

Networking and the Praxis Approach: Research as Social Learning and Policy Development

Just as ideas of grassroots participation and capacity-building have been integrated into the mainstream rhetoric of international development over the last two decades (Chambers, 1983; Clark, 1995), so too has the notion of research as a basis of stakeholder learning and dialogue crept into development-policy discourse (Buchert, 1998; Maclure, 2000; World Bank, 2004). This has been a key theme underlying efforts to "Africanize" educational research and to strengthen links between endogenous research and educational policy-making through the development and expansion of professional networks. Although heavily dependent on external financial aid, a key aim of networking has been to stimulate greater autonomy and solidarity among African educational researchers and to augment their influence on the praxis of policy formulation and implementation (Stren, 2001). To this end, for well over a decade, two professional networks have devoted singular attention to enhancing the capacities, the productivity, and the profiles of African educational researchers and to fostering regional communities of researchers and decision-makers. As a result, both networks have attained prominence among African governments and donor agencies alike. A brief overview of these networks — one regional, the other covering the entire subcontinent — provides insights into an approach to educational research in sub-Saharan Africa that differs markedly from the conventional donor-control model.

The Educational Research Network of West and Central Africa (ERNWACA)
In 1988, with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), a group of West African education specialists formally launched the Educational Research Network of West and Central Africa (ERNWACA).[4] The impetus for doing so was largely the sense of isolation and lack of supportive professional environments that these researchers and their colleagues had long experienced in their own countries. Conceived as a bilingual network of researchers in Francophone and Anglophone countries, ERNWACA has steadily expanded and is now a well-established professional association with national chapters in thirteen countries in West and Central Africa and a membership of approximately 250 researchers.[5] With its headquarters located in Bamako, Mali, ERNWACA is administered by a permanent coordinator who communicates regularly with national members and other significant parties, including officials in national ministries of education and donor-agency representatives, and with educational scholars in Northern countries who have an abiding interest in African education. ERNWACA widely circulates a semi-annual network newsletter that provides information on recent publications and

colloquia, on forthcoming activities, and on the accomplishments of prominent West African educational researchers. Although initially relying heavily on the financial assistance of IDRC, ERNWACA has successfully broadened its base of support to include funding from USAID, UNICEF, UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Education in Africa, the German Foundation for International Development, the Swiss Development Corporation, and PLAN International.

In expanding its presence among educational researchers, ERNWACA has also helped to highlight their work and strengthen their connections with policymakers. Two types of ERWNACA activities have been especially notable in this process: (a) its inventories of existing educational research in member countries, and (b) its support for workshops, meetings, and projects that have enhanced the visibility of educational researchers and served as channels of communication between researchers and policymakers. What follows is a brief overview of these two sets of activities.

The First ERNWACA Inventory:
Two Decades of Post-Independence Educational Research
At the time of ERNWACA's formation, deliberations that immediately preceded and followed the 1990 Jomtien Conference on Basic Education for All frequently alluded to the imperative of strengthening the knowledge base for educational policymaking and reform (UNESCO, 1990; World Bank, 1988). Consequently, as a first tangible step in establishing a semblance of community among educational researchers across extensive national and linguistic boundaries, ERNWACA commissioned its newly created national chapters to undertake inventories of the published and unpublished products of educational research in each member country. Supported financially by IDRC and USAID, researchers in seven countries — Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Ghana, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Togo — embarked on a yearlong process of compiling and analyzing educational research manuscripts, reports, and publications.[6] By combing ministry archives and the libraries of universities and teacher-training colleges, the ERNWACA teams in each country uncovered a total of more than one thousand studies dating from the late 1960s to 1991. More than half of these included unpublished student theses and empirically grounded research papers. While the research uncovered encompassed an extensive range of topics, it was nonetheless possible to group the studies into thematic categories that revealed a broad pattern of an emerging educational crisis that has since become entrenched throughout much of the subcontinent. Very briefly, drawing from a selection of references cited in the national inventories, the findings in each category were as follows.

—Classroom Teaching and Learning: Shortcomings and Constraints
Over the years, teachers and their pupils have confronted a host of adversities: tenuous connections between the norms of family life and schooling (Essindi,

1977; Sow, 1985); severe deficiencies in infrastructures and materials that have undermined possibilities for effective teaching and fruitful learning (Wokwenmendam, 1981); pedagogical practices that have borne little relation to teacher training (Amegnonam, 1986; Mouthe, 1985); and curricular rigidities that have stifled innovation and reform (Diare, 1990; Koomson, 1990; Tetteh, 1989).

—Schooling and the Challenge of Community Engagement

Studies within this thematic cluster revealed two common findings related to community and schooling: persistent failures to establish sustainable income-generating cooperative and farm schools, and perennial difficulties in maintaining effective community management of local schools. Underlying these problems were the complex economic and socio-political dimensions of community life (Dougna, 1986; Rasera, 1986), and the contradictions between the professional and bureaucratic underpinnings of formal schooling and the decentralization of authority for purposes of community engagement in schools (Bediaku-Adu, 1987; Camara, 1987; Cisse, 1984; Gyilime, 1986).

—Education and Post-Educational Livelihoods

Another group of studies underscored the frequent disjuncture between formal schooling and the socio-cultural and economic contexts of local societies for reasons related to both educational supply and demand. On the supply side, there have been pronounced discontinuities between school curricula and labor market realities that have been shaped by weakened economies and the imposition of structural adjustment measures (Hode, 1987; Obanya, 1989). On the demand side, popular perceptions regarding the link between formal schooling and subsequent modern-sector employment remained largely constant, despite rising levels of unemployment among those leaving school (Megbemada, 1987).

—The Limits of Educational Innovation and Reform

The fourth broad category of research uncovered by the ERNWACA inventory project revealed the array of obstacles that has undermined efforts to fundamentally reform African school systems: weaknesses in planning (Gozo, 1977), lack of training and support for teachers and parent representatives (Konate, 1986), lack of consultation and local "ownership" of educational change (Sawadogo, 1984), and lack of recurrent resources for sustaining donor-sponsored innovations (Bockarie, 1979).

Implications of the First ERWNACA Inventory

Covering as it did only seven countries, the ERNWACA inventory was far from being an exhaustive survey of existing educational research in West Africa, let alone the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, the lack of Nigerian involvement in the project was a significant caveat in what had been intended as a compre-

hensive review of educational research in the region. Most of the empirical research consisted of small-scale case studies that limited generalizability to broader political and economic problems affecting educational systems. It was also clear that diagnostic description far outweighed theoretical conceptualizations of educational issues, and that questions of validity and reliability were often ignored. This was not entirely surprising, however, since nearly two-thirds of the studies unearthed consisted of graduate student research essays and dissertations (the latter known as *mémoires* in Francophone countries). Other studies collated in the inventory included many unpublished seminar papers and a variety of technical reports, most of them earmarked for donor agencies and government ministries. Only 8 percent of the collated studies were published articles. The categories and breakdown of studies discussed in this first ERNWACA inventory are presented in Table 1.

For ERNWACA, this first inventory project underscored two key issues. First, despite the paucity of published research, this was an impressive volume of work that offered clear indication that African researchers had mapped out the terrain of many aspects of education in West and Central Africa. While there undoubtedly was room for capacity enhancement, this was ample evidence of a strong spirit of inquiry and evidence-based analysis that could provide fertile grist for the mill of African educational policymaking. Second, however, was the conundrum of a severe lack of dissemination. With the overwhelming proportion of endogenous educational research produced as unpublished theses and monographs that had languished in obscurity on archival shelves, it was clear that although many of these studies may have contributed to individual career advancement, they had added little to the publicly available knowledge base of African education and to educational policy deliberations.

Fortunately, however, the collation of these studies by national ERNWACA teams, and the subsequent publication of the inventory synthesis report (Maclure, 1997), had a substantial effect in boosting the visibility of endogenous African educational research. With the assistance of USAID and ADEA, the synthesis report was translated into French and was circulated widely among international donor agencies and ministries of education. Although it is impossible to assess the impact of this first inventory project, it clearly heightened awareness among senior ministry personnel and educational researchers themselves of the untapped potential of endogenous research as a source for policy reflection and deliberation.[7]

The Second ERNWACA Inventory: Focus on Quality

Partly as a consequence of the first inventory's success in highlighting previously unknown endogenous research in several member countries, in 2002 ERNWACA undertook a second compilation of studies that focused primarily on the issue of educational quality. Although not as wide-ranging as the earlier

TABLE 1   *ERNWACA First Inventory: Types of Research Data*

Types of Research	Frequency
Mémoires (French)	557
Theses (English)	89
Government Reports	146
Joint Agency Reports	7
Donor Agency Reports	55
Published Manuscripts	85
Seminar Papers	37
Unpublished Papers	80
TOTAL	1,056

inventory, this second project was undertaken by researchers in eleven coun-tries and resulted in the collation of more than five hundred research reports. In a summary report of this second inventory project, Obanya (2003) summa-rized the main findings of the principal topics covered by the inventory. Briefly, drawing from selected references, these main findings are summa-rized below.

—Preschooling

This category of research consisted of a number of descriptive studies, several of which highlighted the importance of teachers' remuneration and working conditions (Agusiobo, 1999; Nchungong, 1996; Onuchukwu & Ifeanacho, 2001).

—Teaching Effectiveness

A notable issue discerned in these largely qualitative studies was the signifi-cance of teachers' personality traits over and above their formal academic qualifications. The importance of teacher morale, as exemplified by the attrib-utes of empathy, creativity, and cheerfulness, were deemed essential for effec-tive teaching (Alota, 1999; Goerke, 1995; Sawadogo, 1999).

—Rural-Urban Dichotomies

Although a wave of decentralization policies throughout Western Africa has been oriented toward transferring resources and administrative control of schooling to rural regions, partly in an effort to enhance local ownership of schools and to increase the relevance of schooling to community life, continu-ing differences in examination results and in rates of attrition and repetition in-dicate ongoing fundamental gaps in the quality of urban and rural schools (Madumere-Obike & Oluwuo, 2001; Tchegho, 2003).

—Gender and Education

Studies on this topic have generally indicated that increased female enrollment in schools does not signify a reduction in discrimination against girls. Prevailing patriarchal values and norms manifested in curriculum materials and in classroom interactions appear to discourage girls from excelling in subjects such as math and science, and tends to hasten female dropouts (Amin & Fonkeng, 2000; Azie, 1998; Eta, 2000; Sedel, 1999).

—Language of Instruction

Despite policy rhetoric that is largely supportive of the use of national languages for regular classroom instruction, the lack of resources for curriculum development, textbook publishing, and teacher training, coupled with evidence of lukewarm interest among parents and concerns about the politicization of language selection in multilinguistic regions, have thwarted full-scale institutionalization of national language instruction in the primary school systems of Western and Central Africa (Afiesimama, 1995; Doumbia, 2000; Haidara, 2000; Ogbonna, 2002; Ohiri-Aniche, 2002).

Implications of the Second ERNWACA Inventory

Compared to the earlier ERNWACA-sponsored inventory of educational research that had been conducted before 1991, this second compilation of studies carried out within the more recent ten-year period revealed a much lower proportion of graduate student dissertations: 31 percent versus 61 percent. The percentage of published work also increased in this later review: 19 percent, compared to the relatively meager 8 percent in the first inventory. While a host of methodological factors prevents any definitive explanations for the differing levels of student work and published reports, particularly since Nigeria was included in the second review and not in the first, Obanya (2003) nonetheless has surmised that these differences might be due in part to an ironic combination of deteriorating graduate studies programs in West Africa and increased opportunities and incentives for researchers to publish their work.

Like the first inventory, this second compilation of studies highlighted the extensive volume of largely independent endogenous educational research that continues to be conducted in ERNWACA member countries. Much of this work remains unpublished, however, and there was no indication that any of these studies had had an impact on policy deliberations. As Obanya (2003) observed,

> This exercise demonstrates that some serious research on the quality dimensions of basic education is going on in West and Central Africa, even though a good deal of this work is not known because of the poor state of research communication and archival culture. (p. 36)

Nevertheless, through the very process of conducting an inventory of existing research, and by posting the summative report of the inventory on its website,

TABLE 2   *Recent Selected ERNWACA Studies: Topics and Countries*

Complementarity between formal and nonformal education (Burkina Faso)
Study on the impact of armed conflict on the school system (Côte d'Ivoire)
Evaluation of the Ministry of Education's Scholarship Trust Fund for Girls (The Gambia)
Partnership dynamics in Koranic schools (Mali)
Study on conditions and quality of teachers (Niger)
Externally sponsored support for heightened girls' enrollment in primary schooling (Togo)
Factors affecting primary school pupil access and retention (Côte d'Ivoire and The Gambia)
Effects of community participation on access to and quality of basic education (Benin,
        Ghana, Guinea, and Mali)
Impact of conditionalities on educational reform policies (Benin, Ghana, Guinea, and Mali)

TABLE 3   *National Colloquia Sponsored by ERNWACA, (2004–2005): Activity*

Youth and HIV/AIDS conference (Cameroun)
Colloquium on teacher training (Cameroun)
Colloquium on policy-oriented participatory action research (Ghana)
Colloquium on HIV/AIDS in the education sector (Mali)
Colloquium on school management in the context of decentralization (Mali)
Colloquium on parental perceptions of education (Niger)
Colloquium on participatory action formative research (Nigeria)
Review of research and government policies on HIV/AIDS in the education sector (Senegal)

TABLE 4   *Regional Activities Sponsored by ERNWACA or Involving ERNWACA Membersfrom Two or More Countries (2004–2005): Activity*

Colloquium on education, conflict, and perspectives for peace in Africa (Burkina Faso)
African Union Ministers of Education Conference (Algeria)
Governance, Equity, and Health Conference (Senegal)
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Africa: "Dakar + 5 Education for All" Forum
        (Senegal)
Colloquium on the UN Girls Education Initiative (Senegal)
Colloquium on research and education sector policy implementation (Niger)
Colloquium on gender, education, and skills development (Mali)

ERNWACA has contributed to growing awareness of endogenous research that has been focusing on an array of educational issues.

Research and Policy Dialogue

In addition to bringing to light many unpublished studies and providing regular updates of national researchers and their activities, within the past ten years ERNWACA has helped to sponsor a number of national and regional

studies that have been conducted expressly for the purpose of informing policy dialogue and decisionmaking. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to determine the degree to which any of these studies have actually *shaped* the formulation and implementation of the policies that they were intended to influence, it is clear that endogenous research undertaken under the auspices of ERNWACA has attained a visibility and legitimacy in educational policy dialogue that was clearly not evident in the early 1990s. This is exemplified in Table 2, which outlines a selection of ERNWACA-coordinated national and regional studies that were aimed specifically at contributing to the educational policy deliberations of ministries and international donor agencies (ERNWACA, 2005a, 2005b).

Since its inception, ERNWACA has been actively engaged in numerous meetings and conferences, most of which have brought together ERNWACA researchers with education ministry and donor agency personnel. Tables 3 and 4 present synopses of a series of national and regional meetings in 2004–05, most of which were devoted to educational policy dialogue (ERNWACA, 2005a, 2005b). As noted above, while it is not possible in this paper to demonstrate the degree to which researchers have affected the determination or modification of subsequent policies, suffice it to say that endogenous educational research has become increasingly an integral facet of educational policy dialogue in ERNWACA member countries.

As these studies and activities demonstrate, within the last ten years ERNWACA has established itself as a prominent association of African educational researchers that has a visible corporate presence in Western and Central Africa. Through a concerted effort to highlight and disseminate endogenous educational research, to sponsor studies that have a direct bearing on policy issues, and to strengthen links among educational researchers and policymakers within and among its member countries, ERNWACA has enhanced the profile of endogenous research in discourses related to educational policymaking.

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa

Working on a larger scale than ERNWACA is the Association for the Development of Education in Africa. Originally established in 1988 as the Donors to African Education under the direction of the World Bank, in the early 1990s the organization's statute as an exclusive "donors' club" was abandoned in favor of its reformulation as an association of African ministries of education. In contrast to ERNWACA, whose core purposes have been to reinforce educational research environments through research dissemination and enhanced communication and collaboration among researchers and policymakers in Western and Central African countries, ADEA has a much broader mandate.

Headquartered in the offices of the International Institute of Educational Planning in Paris, ADEA's principal mission for more than a decade has been to promote partnerships among stakeholders and to contribute to capacity-

TABLE 5   *ADEA Working Groups: Groups and Coordinating Institutions*

Current Working Groups
Books and Learning Materials
    U.K.: Department for International Development
    South Africa: Read Educational Trust
Communication for Education and Development
    Benin: Comed Program-Wanad Center
Distance Education/Open Learning
    Mauritius: Tertiary Education Commission
Early Childhood Development
    Mozambique: Royal Netherlands Embassy
    Ghana: UNICEF House
Education Sector Analysis
    France: International Institute of Educational Planning
Education Statistics
    Netherlands: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Finance and Education
    Senegal: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
    Canada: Canadian International Development Agency
Higher Education
    Ghana: Association of African Universities
Non-Formal Education
    Switzerland: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
    U.K.: Commonwealth Secretariat
Teaching Profession
    U.K.: Commonwealth Secretariat
Female Participation
    Kenya: Federation of African Women Educators

Ad-Hoc Groups
HIV/AIDS and Education
    France: ADEA Secretariat
Quality of Education
    France: ADEA Secretariat
Postprimary Education
    France: ADEA Secretariat

Dissolved Working Groups
School Examinations
Education Research and Policy Analysis

building within ministries of education for better management of educational policies. As such, a key objective has been to strengthen the knowledge base of ministries of education through policy-oriented research and systematic communication between researchers and ministry officials. With an annual bud-

get that has recently surpassed U.S. $5 million, ADEA is bankrolled almost entirely by donor agencies (Universalia, 2005). Reflecting the contribution of international donors, ADEA's steering committee, which is responsible for the oversight and governance of the organization, is comprised of twenty-one donor-agency representatives and ten ministers of education. Yet despite this two-to-one imbalance, selected topics of research and policy dialogue are largely a function of the priorities of African ministers (Universalia, 2005).

In pursuing its mandate of enhancing policy through research, ADEA has sponsored three ongoing sets of activities that adhere to the shared praxis of strengthening the interconnections of research, policy, and practice.

—Research Working Groups

The most prominent aspect of ADEA is its research working groups. Each group is coordinated by one or two educational specialists employed in African or donor-country institutions (Table 5). Together the working groups constitute a mix of Africans and non-Africans who are specialists in different aspects of education and who can participate in defining the topics and parameters of specific research projects. In keeping with the evolving nature of issues and problems, three ad hoc working groups have recently been created and two of the original thirteen have been disbanded. In addition, the erstwhile Working Group on Female Participation has become an independent pan-African nongovernmental organization (NGO), the Federation of African Women Educators.

Although diverse in composition and in their terms of reference, the working groups share the functions of undertaking research on specific areas of potential innovation and reform and disseminating the results of research to an audience that consists primarily of ministerial and donor-agency officials who have interests and responsibilities in the areas of inquiry. The purpose of research, therefore, is instrumental: to influence the perspectives and attitudes of key officials and thus affect the formulation of national education policies. As described by Marope and Sack (2005), the research activities of the working groups have contributed significantly to "the pedagogy of policy formulation" (p. 10). A recent evaluation of ADEA notes several examples of working group research influencing national policies (Universalia, 2005). In Niger, an agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance regarding improvements in the disbursement of the country's annual education budget was facilitated by a study conducted by the Working Group on Finance and Education. In Chad, a policy ratifying community hiring of school principals followed recommendations outlined in a report by the Working Group on the Teaching Profession. Similarly, research and advocacy conducted by the Working Group on Female Participation and the Working Group on Early Childhood Development have contributed to policy developments in several countries that focus specifically on gender equity and preschooling (Universalia, 2005).

As articulated in ADEA's formal vision statement, the approach to research as conducted by the working groups is one that promotes "the development of synergies and in some cases the active participation of stakeholders" (ADEA, 2003, p. 1). By conducting research not with the aim of producing policy and program blueprints but as a way to generate a fluid and iterative relationship between policy-oriented inquiry, analysis, and dialogue, the working groups have helped advance the engagement of senior African education policy-makers in ongoing research activities, something often absent from conventional Northern and donor-controlled research projects. This has invariably had the effect of enhancing the profile and the relevance of endogenous African research as a basis of policy deliberation and decisionmaking.

—Meetings and Conferences

In tangent with working group activities that aim to link researchers to policymakers around key policy issues, over the past decade ADEA has organized six biennial meetings that have enabled researchers, ministers of education, senior bureaucrats, and donor agency representatives to convene and discuss policy-related issues in an informal, collegial fashion. By incorporating working group reports as key background documentation, these "Biennials" (as they are referred to within ADEA) have focused on different themes.[8] For example, the unifying theme of the 2003 Mauritius Biennial was The Quest for Quality: Learning from the African Experience. In keeping with this central theme, the three-day meeting consisted of a series of working group reports that were followed by roundtable discussions and informal exchanges, all focused on experiences shared by various countries concerning the challenges of strengthening educational quality in both formal and nonformal educational settings. ADEA organizers work to ensure that Biennial discussions do not dwell solely on diagnoses of educational problems, but instead move on to examine evidence of promising policies and practices, as well as the institutional and contextual factors that underlie successful educational innovations (Marope & Sack, 2005). By incorporating working group reports as key background documentation, the Biennials have provided opportunities for policy-makers to reflect on what has been achieved, how and why achievements have occurred, and what opportunities and challenges must be confronted to guarantee effective policy development and implementation (Universalia, 2005).

A similar agenda underlies ADEA's Intra-African Exchange Program which organizes cross-national research visits that allow senior officials to observe educational innovations and to discuss possibilities for replication as well as corresponding constraints. Launched in 1996, the program is intended to use existing regional capacities to capitalize on the diversity of experiences and expertise.

In terms of a broader international profile, a notable highlight for ADEA was the Tenth World Congress of Comparative Education that took place in Cape Town in 1998. The first major comparative education conference to be held in

Africa, the congress provided an opportunity for African researchers to present their peer-reviewed studies — many of them undertaken under the auspices of ADEA — and to interact with policymakers from elsewhere in Africa and from other parts of the world.

—Publications and Databases

In line with its aim to promote research as a basis for policy-oriented dialogue, the ADEA secretariat has compiled a catalogue of some two hundred African educational research publications and documents. Many of these are now available online. Most of the working group research reports are also included on the ADEA website (http://www.adeanet.org). In addition, the secretariat produces a quarterly newsletter that publicizes the activities of the ADEA working groups and a monthly broadsheet that offers information on recently circulated reports and publications and on educational initiatives in different countries. Both the newsletter and the broadsheet are produced on-line and are also widely distributed to ministries of education, universities, donor agencies, and NGOs.

Another form of dissemination, however, has not been successful. In the mid-1990s, with technical and financial assistance from USAID, the ADEA Secretariat established two comprehensive online databases that were intended to provide continent-wide information on education in Africa for ministries of education and donor agencies. The Statistical Profile of Education in sub-Saharan Africa (SPESSA) was said to be user-friendly, offering an interactive and graphics framework for multiple searches and uses (Hartwell, 1999). The Program and Project Information System on Education was similarly designed to provide up-to-date information on externally funded educational projects and programs in sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately, although the SPESSA was updated in 1999, neither database has been maintained and they have thus lapsed into redundancy. This was due in part to the lack of data emanating from many countries, which effectively thwarted possibilities for maintaining the currency of the databases. There were also indications that the databases were of little use to stakeholders in African countries where access to the Internet has often been slow and sporadic (Universalia, 2005).

The Merits and Limitations of Research Networking
and the Praxis Approach

The studies, the reviews of research, and the range of dissemination activities carried out under the auspices of ERNWACA and ADEA by no means cover the extent of endogenous educational research conducted in sub-Saharan Africa. As mentioned at the outset of this essay, the breadth of education as a field of study does not allow for an in-depth, all-encompassing review of educational research in every African country. Nevertheless, the combination of networking and policy-oriented research that have been central to the mandates of these two professional associations have greatly enhanced endo-

genous African educational research in terms of its overall visibility and its relevance to educational policy deliberations throughout much of the sub-continent.

Three key factors have contributed to the success of these associations in augmenting the stature and influence of endogenous research. The first is the deliberate praxis orientation of the analytical work promoted and sponsored by these associations. To a large extent, this approach to research is rooted in a *raison d'être* that places less emphasis on standards of scientific rigor than it does on the social dynamics of research and the ensuing policy implications. By regarding research not as a meticulously collated and analyzed final "product" to be relayed to recipient decisionmakers, but rather as a catalyst of informed dialogue and negotiation among diverse educational policy stakeholders, these associations have attempted to situate research as an integral facet of educational policymaking and practice. From the perspective of this praxis approach to educational research, dialogue among key educational stakeholders that serves as the tangible link between knowledge creation and diffusion is as significant as the methodology of research and the content of knowledge acquired. Research, in other words, provides the springboard for collective learning and reflection that, once set in motion, may go beyond the parameters of the research itself.

This focus on collaborative stakeholder learning underscores a fundamental difference between the praxis orientation to research as exemplified by ERNWACA and ADEA and the more standardized procedures of donor-controlled research that generally focus on producing discrete research outcomes for purposes of formulating policy prescriptions and blueprints. The praxis approach is founded on the assumption that knowledge gathering and the utilization of knowledge are mutually reinforcing. Accordingly, there is a close symbiotic relation between inquiry, learning, and action, one not far from the precepts of participatory action research and the notion of indigenous knowledge as being "incarnated" in people's reflections and actions (World Bank, 2004). Indeed, as Marope (1999) has observed, this orientation is akin to a "self-study approach" that is meant to engage education officials in critically reviewing their own projects and programs. As such, "the development of a sustained culture of critical self-reflection . . . [takes] precedence over analytical sophistication" (p. 4).

A second critical factor, one that was not really foreseen when both ERNWACA and ADEA were first established, has been the advent of the Internet as a medium of dissemination. ADEA in particular has made effective use of this method of communication. Reports and publications, newsletters and news briefs, conference proceedings and *Who's Who* lists of African educational researchers are now regularly featured on ADEA's website and through ERNWACA's periodical electronic bulletins. The instantaneous nature of this form of communication and dissemination has greatly enhanced the visibility of African educational researchers and their work, not only among ministries

of education and international donor agencies, but among Africanists and comparative education scholars in Northern countries. Indeed, given the universality and growing predominance of the Internet as a research tool in the North, there are indications that Northerners are becoming more knowledgeable about the scope and content of endogenous African educational research than are their African colleagues for whom access to the Internet is more expensive and cumbersome.[9] The advent of "networks of knowledge" (Stein, Stren, Fitzgibbon, & MacLean, 2001) that cross disciplinary, linguistic, organizational, and national lines, and that break free of formal, hierarchical structures in order to respond to broad social processes and policy issues, has proven to be enormously beneficial for African researchers. Through the combination of social capital and telecommunications afforded by research networks such as ERNWACA and ADEA, researchers in sub-Saharan Africa are attaining a greater and more independent voice in educational policy deliberations.

The third critical factor underlying the vibrancy of ERNWACA and ADEA has been a combination of dynamic leadership and sustained donor-agency support. Both of these associations have benefited from energetic and highly committed leaders. Since 1999, the regional coordinator of ERNWACA, Kathyrn Touré, has been indefatigable in developing links among educational researchers and decisionmakers, in encouraging the development of collaborative research projects, in disseminating research results, and in fundraising. Similarly, as the executive secretary of ADEA from 1996 to 2002, Richard Sack was instrumental in engaging ministries of education in the association's research activities and in promoting the dissemination of endogenous research as a vehicle for policy reform. His successor, ADEA's current Executive Secretary, Mamadou Ndoye, a former minister of education in Senegal, has likewise been described as having "considerable political and professional influence that helps him relate easily to donors and ministers alike . . . [and] being instrumental in facilitating dialogue and negotiating the numerous demands that are made on [ADEA]" (Universalia, 2005, p. 30). In large part because of such leadership, both ERNWACA and ADEA have been able to maintain a sustainable core of international financial and technical support.

Nevertheless, while networking and a praxis approach to research have undoubtedly raised the profile of endogenous educational research in sub-Saharan Africa, and while ministries of education appear more willing to heed the expertise of African educational researchers than they were before the early 1990s, evidence of the actual *impact* of endogenous African educational research on subsequent policy formulation and implementation remains sketchy and anecdotal.[10] To some extent this relates to the almost universal conundrum of the research/policy interface. Despite the proliferation of forums that have facilitated dialogue among African researchers and senior government officials, the formulation of African educational policies and the subsequent *implementation* of these policies are invariably constrained by ex-

tensive political, economic, technological, and sociocultural constraints. Lack of resources and weak systems of governance are major structural shortcomings that undermine the potential of praxis-oriented research from having an impact on educational policies and practices.

In addition, while ERNWACA and ADEA have benefited from the remarkable leadership of key individuals, particularly in terms of their organizational abilities and their collective energies in fostering communication and collaboration among researchers and decisionmakers, it is a truism that dynamic leadership is rarely sustainable. Likewise, sources of external financial support are finite, no matter how diversified they are. Without solid long-term institutional and financial foundations, the fortunes and accomplishments of professional networks in sub-Saharan Africa can quickly wane. This has been the fate of ERNWACA's counterpart — the Educational Research Network of East and Southern Africa (ERNESA) — which has lacked effective coordination in recent years, and therefore has lost most of its longstanding financial support.[11] This is clearly hazardous for African educational researchers who rely on network associations to provide them with significant opportunities to conduct and disseminate their research.

In addition, although research networks such as ERNWACA and ADEA can be highly effective in enhancing endogenous research capacity, they do not have the resources or the political influence to ensure long-term national institutional support for research within their member countries. In part this is because they are not bona fide *national* institutions. Despite the advantages of networking outlined above, ERNWACA and ADEA cannot singularly overcome problems associated with resource scarcity, political interference, and weak archival cultures that continue to render the conduct of independent research difficult in sub-Saharan Africa. While educational researchers and ministry officials have clearly benefited from their affiliations with these networks, there are others who have not been drawn into the orbits of these networks — particularly into inner circles of influence, such as membership in the ADEA working groups or participation in regional workshops and conferences (Universalia, 2005). For many outsiders, regionally and nationally conducted studies are still often either inaccessible or unknown. As Obanya (2003) has observed, the abiding lack of a culture of research communication continues to necessitate Herculean efforts to retrieve many endogenous research documents that are unpublished and excluded from databases.

In effect, professional networks are not fully grounded national institutions, and hence their ability to enhance research capacity and inculcate a culture of scholarly production and dissemination is constrained. Only through the strengthening of African universities, which are officially mandated to function as centers of teaching and research, coupled with reforms in systems of governance that are amenable to accommodating and supporting critical policy-oriented inquiry, will endogenous educational research be in a position to shift away from what has become an entrenched dependency on external fi-

nancial and technical assistance. It is a dependency that is most obviously manifested through the direct involvement of African researchers in donor-controlled research and evaluation activities, but is also at issue under the auspices of research networks that must themselves rely on external assistance. Indeed, in the long run, if national universities have more resources to invest in strengthening their own institutional research capacities, regional and continental networking will likely become even more effective in facilitating the recognition and validation of endogenous African research.

Conclusion

The starting point of this essay centered on the following question: Is endogenous African educational research as overlooked and undervalued as it was over a decade ago when the first ERNWACA national inventories were conducted and ADEA was a fledgling offshoot of the Donors to African Education consortium? In broad terms the answer is mixed. Over the last ten years, a vast number of studies on education in Africa have been produced, many of them by African scholars working either individually or in partnership with Northern colleagues. Through various forms of networking, many of these studies have been widely disseminated and have attained substantial visibility. Yet the status of endogenous education research in much of sub-Saharan Africa remains ambiguous. Since most African universities are unable to function as major independent centers of social science research, African educational researchers have been highly dependent on funding from Northern sources. To a large extent, therefore, as outlined in this essay, the bulk of African educational research is currently being conducted in two distinctive ways: through studies that are commissioned and administered by international donor agencies in accordance with their own organizational mandates, and under the auspices of networks such as ERNWACA and ADEA that have promoted educational research as an essential process for enhancing the inevitable stakeholder discussions that underlie educational policies and practices. The differences in these two modalities of support entail fundamentally different purposes of research and consequently compel researchers to assume different roles and responsibilities. This then suggests that the status of endogenous African educational research must be qualified in terms of a postcolonial proviso: overlooked and undervalued — or recognized and appreciated — by *whom*?

Since the World Bank and other major donor agencies have assumed significant roles as knowledge producers and policy advisors to African governments, the donor-control approach to educational research is heavily funded and has thus become an attractive option for prominent African scholars. The studies these researchers undertake, sometimes as permanent agency staff members and at other times on a contractual basis, are obviously neither overlooked nor undervalued by the organizations for which they are undertaken. Nor are they overlooked by African governments that must negotiate the

conditionalities of educational assistance programs with the agency sponsors of the studies in question. Indeed, in many respects there is little reason to critique the scope and quality of donor-controlled sector studies and program evaluations. The problem is not with the research per se — not the topics of inquiry, nor the methodologies that have been used, nor many of the findings that have resulted. Rather, as critics have frequently argued, it is the way agencies have so often attempted to *control* the entire progression of research from data collection and analysis to dissemination of results as a basis for policy-making and program implementation that is often flawed (Reimers & McGinn, 1997; Samoff & Stromquist, 2001). Within this modality of research support, where terms of reference are determined by the donor-agency sponsors, there is relatively little scope for autonomous intellectual expression. Although African researchers are now frequently involved in eliciting information and producing research findings for aid agencies, they do not *own* the research, nor do they control its dissemination and utilization. To a large degree, donor control of research has generated a profound degree of external dependency.

In contrast, the alternative strategy of networking and the adoption of a praxis orientation to research has helped not only to augment the status of endogenous educational research among African policymakers, but also has fostered processes of subjective dialogue and learning that are as significant as the completion and delivery of a final document to stakeholder recipients. In so doing, as exemplified most strikingly by ADEA's working groups, the combined strategy of networking and a praxis approach to research has tended to expand the role of policy stakeholders from being recipients of research products to becoming partners in research processes. Underlying this approach is the fact that research and policymaking are practices that are not mutually exclusive, but can be conducted as interrelated and mutually beneficial activities.

Whether it is conducted within the framework of the donor-control approach or as part of a more associational, praxis-oriented approach, the work of many African educational researchers is no longer overlooked and undervalued among those who are engaged in deliberating on educational policies in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet in circumstances where the emphasis is on the social and pedagogical aspects of the research process, there is less of a propensity to strive for a fully polished "product" capable of being disseminated beyond forums of face-to-face discussion or relatively easy website postings. As a result, research that is valued for its praxis orientation is rarely recognized in the realm of international scholarship for which the publication of books, scholarly articles, and other peer-reviewed forms of dissemination are critical for validation. For those who advocate the value of applied research, this may not be seen as a critical issue, for in African countries where there are so many pressing educational challenges, peer-reviewed scholarship may appear to be a needless distraction. Yet in a world where the standards of international scholarship are largely defined in Northern countries, this has an inevitable

effect on North-South power imbalances. In the long run, if there is to be a more level playing field in terms of the influence of educational research in sub-Saharan Africa, then there is a case to be made for increased efforts to transform a greater volume of endogenous educational research into peer-reviewed endogenous educational *scholarship.* To achieve this, however, will require not just the continuation of professional networking, but a more substantive strengthening of national institutions of research. In effect, while networking and praxis approaches have contributed significantly to African educational research, they must invariably be regarded as measures that precede the revitalization of African college and university systems as centers of endogenous research.

Notes

1. This is a commonly accepted term for high-income, or developed, countries, many of which are geographically situated in the northern hemisphere
2. In September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders agreed to a set of eight time-bound Millenium Development Goals, which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015.
3. In 1990 (March 5–9), delegates from 155 countries and representatives from over 150 organizations agreed at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, to universalize primary education and to greatly reduce illiteracy within a decade.
4. As Camerounian researchers were included in the network and because Cameroun is generally regarded as being situated in central Africa rather than in western Africa, the network included reference to the central region.
5. ERNWACA chapters exist in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.
6. Three of the member countries — Nigeria, Niger, and Senegal — did not participate in this first network activity. The gap left by Nigeria was naturally significant, for it undoubtedly is a repository of a vast range of national research on education.
7. ADEA's former executive director, Richard Sack, once commented to me that on his trips to Africa he regularly distributed copies of the synthesis report to education ministers and senior ministry officials, and that this served as a useful reminder of the substantial "home-grown" talents of national researchers and the merits of them in policy dialogue.
8. The sequence of Biennials has been as follows:

    Implementation of Educational Reforms (France, 1993)
    Formulating Education Policy: Lessons and experiences from Sub-Saharan Africa (France, 1995)
    Partnerships for Capacity Building and Quality Improvement (Senegal, 1997)
    What Works and What's New in African Education (South Africa, 1999)
    Reaching Out, Reaching All: Sustaining Effective Policy and Practice (Tanzania, 2001)
    Improving the Quality of Education (Mauritius, 2003)

9. On several occasions within the past two or three years, through no prompting of my own, graduate students have referred to ERNWACA and ADEA studies that they have obtained from the Internet for inclusion in their term papers or seminar presentations.
10. An example of this localized connection between research and action is reflected in the experience of Tin Tua, a national NGO in Burkina Faso, which resuscitated a fal-

tering state-supported literacy campaign in early 1990s and has since evolved into a federated system of community literacy centers and community-based primary schools. Underlying the dynamic of Tin Tua has been collaboration between a professor of linguistics, with an applied research background in adult education and Gulmancema, the *lingua franca* of the Gulma region of Burkina Faso, and local community leaders who were keen to revive and expand literacy training in their region (Faure, Maclure, Dao Sow, & Coulibaly, 2003).

11. Personal communication with IDRC personnel in Ottawa.

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