

Africa-related research, teaching and strategies in Finnish higher education institutions



FAP1

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Main results

- Africa is a diverse and increasingly important destination in the future.
- Increasing research, education and societal impact in Africa and bringing teaching content related to Africa to the centre of teaching are important factors now and in the future.
- Greater and deeper cooperation between researchers is important, so efforts should be made to promote the networking of researchers. The methods highlighted in the survey include different research networks in Finland: there is a need for events and activities that gather researchers together, such as seminars or Africa days.
- Multidisciplinary research projects and permanent research stations were considered important for good and high-quality research and networking.
- Africa-related research is carried out at several universities in Finland. The number of surveys has also risen since 2010. Finnish research and cooperation are particularly focused on Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa, where universities have long-term cooperation.
- Nationally, the Government's Strategy for Africa guides Africa-related actions in Finland. Only the University of Helsinki has an Africa program in Higher education institutions
- Many universities have cooperation in Africa, but this is not reflected in the strategies.
- Internationality and sustainable development are the main objectives of almost all university strategies.

Background

- In autumn 2021, Africa-related research, education and higher education activities were investigated in a global pilot funded by the Ministry of Education and Training (FAPI) (Finland-Africa Platform for Innovation SDG9)
- FAPI is a network of 27 Finnish universities and universities
- University of Turku coordinates FAPI
- The studies were prepared by FAPI's academic coordinator Professor Jussi S. Jauhiainen and assistant geography students Ville Haka, Essi Heiskanen and Aapo Käki.

Basics

- The project examined Africa-related studies, Africa-related teaching in universities, and strategies for Africa in Higher education institutions.
- The study started from the University of Turku, where we tested the methods of acquiring the data.
- There is some Africa-related research in Finland, but it has not been compiled as a database and cooperation between different parties is quite limited.
- The material was collected from publication databases and directly from different universities and researchers.

Stages of the process

- 1. Africa-related study conducted at the University of Turku
- 2. Interviews with researchers at the University of Turku
- 3. Interviews with researchers at the National level
- 4. Africa-related teaching at the University of Turku
- 5. Africa-related teaching at Finnish universities
- 6. Africa strategies of Finnish Higher education institutions
- 7. Administrative strategies for Africa

1. Africa-related study conducted at the University of Turku



Data and methods:

- Incites, Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar.
- In addition, a sample of database from the University of Turku Library.
- The data was exported and collected in Excel.
- Articles from 2000 to 2021 were collected and classified, but for the final database we concluded articles that were published between 2010–2021.
- The articles were categorized by the year of publication, discipline, keywords and gender of the author, among other things.

Results:

- The database consisted of approximately 600 articles.
- Most of the articles are written in English.
- The database was supplemented with a few Articles in Finnish.
- Among disciplines, most research was done in the disciplines of biology, geography and medicine.
- The majority of studies belong to category "A"
- A small majority of the main researchers are men, but several studies also involve women.
- Number of researchers studying Africa has increased since 2010.
- African researchers are also involved in the publications.

2. Interviews with researchers at the University of Turku



- The interviews were conducted by phone and email. The researchers were asked six questions. There were nine researchers interviewed in the University of Turku.
- Communication between the researchers varied and those who had researched for a longer period had more contacts and familiarity.
- Long-term research and commitment were considered to be important factors in Africa-related research.
- The researchers hoped for a better network, seminars and events for those who studied Africa.
- OKM's global pilot projects were not very familiar to the researchers





3. Interviews with researchers at the National level

- In addition to the researchers from the University of Turku, 21 researchers were interviewed in Finland. According to the Google Scholar referral tool, among the most referenced.
- The number of interviewees was highest among University of Helsinki, but also from other universities.
- Different disciplines were widely taken into account in interviews.
- The researchers' networks and cooperation patterns were diverse and different from each other.
- The research and researchers in their field, who have studied Africa-related issues for a long time were best known and their projects were best also best known.
- Research into Africa requires long-term commitment and presence in Africa. In addition, the right and adequate funding was considered important.
- Global pilot projects were unknown to the majority.

4. Africa-related teaching at the University of Turku



- At the University of Turku, Africa-related teaching is mainly focused on the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and the Faculty of Humanities
- Education supply was mainly related to sustainable development, language diversity and global issues
- In addition, the teaching of courses draws on examples related to Africa, even if Africa is not at the center of the teaching.
- 13 of the courses handle Africa at the center of the teaching, whereas 30 of the courses handle only Africa-related themes.

5. Africa-related teaching at Finnish universities



- Many courses ignore themes related to Africa, but Africa as a region and destination is rarely at the centre of teaching
- Courses often deal with cultural factors, sustainable development, language diversity and regional context
- UniPID is to some extent a significant platform in teaching
- Africa-related teaching provision should be increased and diversified in all universities.
- There is a need to put Africa more prominently at the center of the education, and Africa should also be treated more closely from a regional point of view.

6. Africa strategies of Finnish Higher education institutions



- The University of Helsinki's Africa program is the first comprehensive action program on Africa in Finland.
- The aim of the program is to establish sustainable and long-term cooperation. Science, research and learning are at the target of the program.
- Internationalization and sustainable development are at the center of the University of Turku's strategy.
- In the strategies of the Higher education institutions, Africa is not usually mentioned, but many of them place emphasis on internationalization and sustainable development in their strategies.
- Many Higher education institutions (not all) have activities and cooperation in Africa

7. Administrative strategies for Africa



- The Government approved Finland's Strategy for Africa on 18 March 2021. It will diversify and deepen Finland's relations with African countries, the African Union (AU) and regional organizations, with a particular focus on political and economic relations.
- The strategy is shared by the entire central government and was prepared under the lead of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The strategy guides the activities and objectives of other ministries, joining Africa.
- Finland's Strategy for Africa strengthens the political and economic partnership with African countries and African other actors.

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