

Open Research Awards 2026



Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences disciplines prize

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Co-Constructing Knowledge Across Continents: Open Research, Indigenous Methodologies, and Collaborative Dissemination With East African Researchers

Introduction to the case study

My recent work with researchers, teachers, and educational leaders across Tanzania and Kenya has focused on developing an open, collaborative model of research that foregrounds co-production, indigenous knowledge, and shared methodological ownership. Unlike traditional extractive models of international research, this approach centres East African partners as co-researchers throughout every stage, from project design to pre-publication review, dissemination, and long-term impact-building.

This methodology has underpinned research that was subsequently published as a chapter in *Contemporary Educational Management in East Africa: Tackling Challenges of Inclusion, Leadership and Digital Integration* (Routledge, 2026), and the strength of this model has led Routledge to consider two further edited volumes.

Detail the practices you have used to support openness/reproducibility

My research approach was intentionally designed to be open, collaborative, and reproducible across all stages. Research questions, tools, and early thematic interpretations were co-constructed with colleagues, teachers, and school leaders in Tanzania and Kenya to ensure shared ownership and transparency. All draft findings, transcripts, and thematic summaries were shared with partners prior to publication, enabling verification, contextual correction, and collective decision-making about how data should be represented.

Methods were fully documented, including protocols for semi-structured interviews, walking interviews, and photo/video elicitation. Sampling frames, interview guides, coding structures, and analytic steps were recorded in detail so the approach can be

replicated in other East African partnership settings. Reciprocal school visits in Tanzania and England served as open analysis workshops, where emerging interpretations were refined collaboratively.

Ethical openness was central: consent, quotation permissions, and data storage agreements were negotiated with partner schools, ensuring they retained appropriate control over locally generated knowledge. Reflexive journals and version-tracked codebooks provided an audit trail of how interpretations evolved through dialogue with participants.

Finally, authorship, dissemination roles, and rights to reuse materials were agreed with partners from the outset, ensuring transparency and equitable recognition across all outputs.

Outline any barriers or challenges you encountered, and how they were handled

Several challenges emerged during the collaboration. Differences in institutional ethics protocols required renegotiation, as Western university procedures did not always align with local expectations; this was resolved by revising consent processes and co-developing data-sharing agreements with partners. Limited time and capacity in some East African schools meant communication and feedback cycles were slower, so timelines were adapted and analysis sessions embedded into reciprocal visits.

Power imbalances, particularly around language, mobility, and research ownership, were addressed through shared authorship decisions and returning interpretative control to participants. Logistical and visa constraints were mitigated through flexible scheduling and remote co-analysis when travel was restricted.

What benefits have you identified from your case?

The open, collaborative approach significantly strengthened the quality, credibility, and cultural relevance of the research. Co-development with East African partners produced richer, more nuanced interpretations grounded in local realities. Returning drafts for review improved accuracy and reduced the risk of imposing external assumptions. Reciprocal visits deepened trust, enabling more honest dialogue and expanded access to schools and communities. The methodology also empowered participants, reinforcing professional identity and ensuring their perspectives shaped final outputs. Ultimately, the approach generated broader impact, enhancing partnership practices, informing policy discussions, and leading to further commissioned publications based on the value of the collaborative model.

How do you plan to continue this case moving forward?

I will deepen the collaboration by co-developing new research questions with East African partners, ensuring future studies are driven by locally identified priorities. Ongoing reciprocal visits will be used to extend joint analysis, support capacity-building

workshops, and strengthen long-term institutional relationships. I plan to expand participation to additional schools and regional researchers to broaden comparative insight. Methodologically, I will refine the open, reflexive approach by improving shared data management and expanding the use of visual and community-led methods. Finally, the emerging findings will inform the development of the next two edited volumes, ensuring partners shape both content and direction.

Conclusions

This case demonstrates that open, co-constructed research strengthens trust, deepens cultural understanding, and produces richer, more authentic findings. By sharing power, methods, and interpretation with East African partners, the work becomes more ethical, meaningful, and impactful. The approach now forms a sustainable foundation for future collaborative research and publication.

Links to any materials/resources relevant to the case

Routledge Volume (Published Work)

Busby, S., Raphael, C., & Lekule, R. (Eds.). (2026). *Contemporary educational management in East Africa: Tackling challenges of inclusion, leadership and digital integration*. Routledge.

Photo / Video Elicitation and Visual Methods

Foundational works:

Clark-Ibáñez, M. (2004). *Framing the social world with photo-elicitation interviews*. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47(12), 1507–1527.

Harper, D. (2002). *Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation*. *Visual Studies*, 17(1), 13–26.

Pink, S. (2013). *Doing visual ethnography* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Prosser, J., & Loxley, A. (2008). *Introducing visual methods*. ESRC National Centre for Research Methods.

Rose, G. (2016). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Video-based and multimodal elicitation:

Jewitt, C. (2012). *An introduction to using video for research*. National Centre for Research Methods.

Lomax, H. (2015). *Seen and heard? Ethics and agency in participatory visual research with children, young people, and families*. *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 4(3), 493–502.

Partnerships, Fieldwork, and Cross-Cultural Research

(Useful contextual references supporting my case methodology)

Atkinson, W. (2016). *Beyond Bourdieu: Critical realism and social reproduction*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Eburne, J. (2018). *Outsider theory: Intellectual histories of unorthodox ideas*. University of Minnesota Press.

Merton, R. K. (1972). *Insiders and outsiders: A chapter in the sociology of knowledge*. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(1), 9–47.

Chisholm, L. (2001). *The making of South Africa's national curriculum statement*. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 33(1), 7–25.

Campbell, C. (1999). *Women, families and HIV/AIDS: A sociological perspective on behaviour change*. *Social Science & Medicine*, 49(11), 1689–1703.

Jenkins, R. (2004). *Social identity* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Indigenous / Local Knowledge, Data Sovereignty, and Ethics

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. University of Toronto Press.

Walter, M., & Suina, M. (2019). *Indigenous data, Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous data sovereignty*. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 22(3), 233–243.

Bourdieu Framework References

(Aligned with my methodological approach)

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. University of Chicago Press.

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