Research integrity in Africa: Perspectives from the African Research Integrity Network (ARIN)

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*Good research practice in a changing world*
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Research integrity in Africa

• Research integrity and Africa
  • About Africa
  • Research and research capacity in Africa
  • Research integrity in Africa – emerging perspectives

• Research integrity in and for Africa
  • The African Research Integrity Network (ARIN)

• Research integrity in, for and from Africa
  • The next World Conference on Research Integrity (WCRI)
About Africa

- Has 54 sovereign countries (2 disputed regions) Most borders drawn during era of European colonialism
- Rich in linguistic, cultural and religious diversity
- Knowledge systems influenced by different intellectual traditions and indigenous knowledge
- Second largest continent in terms of land area; second most populous with 60% under the age of 25 (2020)
- Approaching 20% of the world’s population; scientific output in the region of 2% of global production
Research and research capacity in Africa

• Limited and diminishing levels of funding for research

• Postcolonial era: Growth in establishment of, and enrolment at, universities
  • Still relatively low levels of university access compared with global average
  • Primary purpose of university – development, training
  • Only a few research-intensive universities
  • Uneven quality of teaching and research

• Also a few non-university institutes or centres dedicated to research

• Collaboration, mobility and exchange
  • Student, researcher and lecturer mobility relatively high between African countries
  • Research funding and co-authored publications appear to be more prevalent between African and non-African countries, strongest in biomedical sciences
Research integrity in Africa – emerging perspectives

Prevalence and types of misconduct?

• Very little information – no formal reporting systems or structures
• Exploratory study on retracted articles involving authors from Africa
  • Retraction ≠ misconduct, but can provide some insight
  • Levels of retraction seem to be on par with other countries and regions
  • Reasons for retraction similar to other countries and regions
  • Most prevalent – plagiarism, duplicate publication
  • Implications for training, awareness raising and access to resources
  • Questions around communication, due process, power relations
  • Recommendations for national governments, funding agencies, academic publishers, research and academic training institutions, individual researchers

Rossouw, Matsau & Van Zyl (2020)
Research integrity in Africa – emerging perspectives

Systems, structures and support?

• Lack of national, regional or continental guidelines
• Very few instances of institutional structures or support systems
• More instances of compliance and awareness around research ethics
• “Pockets” of initiatives:
  • National – guidelines (Uganda)
  • Institutional – training or degree programmes (South Africa)
  • Professional bodies – training and awareness raising (Nigeria)
  • Project-driven – becoming institutionalised (Ghana, Kenya)
  • Individual champions – workshops, conferences, publications
Research integrity in Africa – emerging perspectives

Research Ethics (RE) and Research Integrity (RI)

• Culture and structures for RE knowledge and compliance – more mature
• RI and RCR often seen as related, similar, or less important
• Pressure on REC structures and officials to also cater for RI
• But RI officials or champions do need special skills, resources and support
• Some observations:
  • Vital to have support and understanding on the side of senior management
  • Special skills, knowledge and experience needed by RIOs or “named persons”
  • Policies and procedures to be borrowed, but also adapted and “workshopped”
  • Training and awareness raising – all steps of the career ladder
  • Broaden the pool of skilled individuals to serve as RI officers, champions, advisors, investigation committee members
  • Need for inter-institutional and international collaboration, mentoring and networking
The African Research Integrity Network (ARIN)

- Conceived during 4th WCRI in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, in 2015
  - Very few delegates from Africa, did not know each other
  - Apparent lack of data and initiatives on RI in Africa
- Still informal, entirely voluntary and unfunded
- Bringing together individuals
  - Different parts of the continent, different roles
  - Shared interest in research integrity
  - Learning from and about each other
- Growing to communicate, coordinate, promote, activate
  - Newsletters, webinars
  - Working towards constitution and formal launch in 2022
The African Research Integrity Network (ARIN)

Membership as at May 2021

- 68 member from 11 African countries
- 9 “Friends of ARIN” from USA & Europe

Pie chart showing membership distribution by country: Botswana, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia.
The African Research Integrity Network (ARIN)

Slogan:
Promoting research integrity in Africa and for Africa

Proposed Goal:
To nurture a culture of integrity for African researchers, institutions, and decision makers, guided by African perspectives and focused on groups and inclusive thinking
The African Research Integrity Network (ARIN)

Proposed Objectives:

• To sustain dialogue, engagement and networking among African role-players and stakeholders of Research Integrity (RI)

• To develop a better understanding of – and sensitise people about – the conditions for RI in African scholarship

• To share relevant information and resources on RI

• To create and nurture capacity building and leadership in RI
The next World Conference on Research Integrity (WCRI)

World Conferences on Research Integrity – Influential, leading to (e.g.)

• Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (2010)  
  https://wcrif.org/guidance/singapore-statement


• Hong Kong Principles for assessing researchers (2019)  
  https://wcrif.org/guidance/hong-kong-principles

Seventh WCRI – in Cape Town, South Africa!

Conference theme: ‘Fostering Research Integrity in an Unequal World’
7th World Conference on Research Integrity

Cape Town, South Africa

29 May – 1 June 2022

30 May - 2 June 2021

Join the WCRI for a series of FREE Webinars taking place from 30 May to 2 June 2021.

Save the dates in your calendar – you don’t want to miss these informative and topical
We, the 7WCRI Co-Chairs would like to invite you to attend the FREE bridging Digital event of the 7th World Conference on Research Integrity 2022

- **When:** 31st May – 2nd June 2021


- 12 webinars on 6 topics, with excellent speakers from across the globe.
- Session topics duplicated but speakers mostly different.

Dr. Lyn Horn
Director, Office of Research Integrity, University of Cape Town

Prof. Lex M Bouter
Prof of Methodology and Integrity, Vrije University, Amsterdam and Chair of WCRI Foundation Board

Dr. Sabine Kleinert
Senior Executive Editor, The Lancet
Webinar Sessions: 10:00 am and 8:00 pm EET

• 1 & 3 What is Research Integrity?
• 2 & 4 Carrot or a stick? How might funders and publishers respond to new challengers for research integrity
• 5 & 7 Towards a Cape Town Statement on Fostering Research Integrity through equity, fairness and diversity
• 6 & 8 Implementation of the Hong Kong principles in Low and Middle Income Countries
• 9 & 11 What can Research Producing Organisations (RPOs) do to Foster RI?
• 10 & 12 Research interpretation and data use with integrity in the COVID pandemic
The next World Conference on Research Integrity

7th WCRI in 2022
Fostering Research Integrity in an Unequal World

Plenaries:
- Data, research, and integrity in the time of a global pandemic (COVID-19)
- Towards a Cape Town statement on fair and equitable partnerships
- How enhanced data quality can boost innovation
- Fostering research integrity: perspectives from African researchers (official launch of ARIN!!)
- Important work by early and mid-career researchers
- Impact of research assessment and institutional ranking on research integrity

Focus Track:
- Cape Town Statement on diversity, equity and fairness in research contexts

Pre-conference Workshops, Symposia, Concurrent Sessions Doctoral Forum, Meet-the-Experts Sessions, Poster Sessions
More information relevant to this presentation

7th World Conference on Research Integrity: Events to be hosted in 2021 and 2022 [https://wcri2022.org/](https://wcri2022.org/)

African Research Integrity Network (ARIN) – newsletters 1 (August 2018), 2 (November 2019), 3 (May 2020) and 4 (February 2021), more information available from [https://africarinetwork.wixsite.com/website](https://africarinetwork.wixsite.com/website) and africarinetwork@gmail.com


Asante
Dankie
E dupe
Ke a leboga
Ndatenda
Ngiyabonga
Thank you
Zikomo