

Beyond research output: The importance of research ethics for educational innovation and scholarly progress

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Abstract

This editorial begins with the concern that, in the interest of increasing research output, the issue of research ethics might have been placed on the back burner. Unless Ethiopian higher education institutions recognize unethical research practices by their faculty members and students as a threat to their reputation and credibility, they will gradually lose the trust and acceptance of both the scientific community and the wider public they are meant to serve. As a result, they will find it difficult to establish themselves as centers of innovation and progress. This editorial identifies some of the causes of unethical research practices and suggests possible solutions. It also outlines the focus and major findings of each article published in this issue. The articles featured in Volume 26, Issue 2, address some of the most persistent concerns in modern education: instructional leadership, curriculum implementation, pedagogical competence, assessment practices, technology-enhanced learning, educational aid, teacher knowledge, and the availability of instructional resources. Although the studies are located in different educational contexts across Africa, particularly Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Nigeria, they converge on a common theme—the need to strengthen educational quality through effective leadership, innovative pedagogy, informed assessment practices, and institutional support.

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Introduction

Research output has steadily increased in Africa during the twenty-first century (Heleta & Jithoo, 2023), driven in part by efforts to promote educational innovation and scholarly progress. This growth may have been facilitated by online publishing, which has increased the number of scholarly journals and improved access for researchers on the African continent (Jantakun et al., 2025). This trend has been particularly notable in countries such as South Africa (Shareefa et al., 2026), and similar trends have also been observed in Ethiopia (Aga, 2025).

It seems that as institutions of higher learning have focused on increasing research output to remain competitive locally and worldwide, they have neglected the importance of conducting research ethically (Liu et al., 2026). Recognizing the serious consequences of unethical research practices, many higher education institutions have developed policies and strategies aimed at promoting research integrity and preventing research misconduct (Resnik et al., 2015; Steneck, 2006). However, unethical practices in doing research have persisted (Plevris, 2025; Zhang & Wang, 2025), possibly due to weak oversight mechanisms, insufficient

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mentorship, misuse of technology, socio-cultural acceptance of unethical behavior, and inadequate national research policies (Sozon & Parnthe, [2026](#)). Unless higher education institutions in Africa address the problem of unethical research practices head-on, it would be difficult for them to establish themselves as centers of innovation and progress.

According to the website of Committee on Publication Ethics, research ethics is “making sure research is conducted honestly, accurately, safely and without making up or altering data or images” (COPE, [2023](#)). The same source identifies practices such as data fabrication, falsification and plagiarism as unethical research practices. Unethical research practices may also have been exacerbated by the advent of artificial intelligence, which can make unethical practices more difficult to detect and control (Günes & Kaban, [2025](#)).

Sozon and Parnthe ([2026](#)) recommend that prioritizing research quality, establishing independent research integrity offices, integrating ethics education into academic programs, and promoting collaboration among governments, universities, and publishers as ways of controlling unethical research practices. Bahir Dar University, the publisher of *Bahir Dar Journal of Education* has, for the first time in its history, acquired plagiarism detection software as part of its efforts to reduce potential unethical research practices among faculty members and students. The software will definitely have a significant impact on reducing the incidence of unethical research practices; however, the use of the software alone may not be sufficient to overcome unethical research and publication practices.

One of the challenges in research and publication arises when faculty members or students are found to have violated ethical research norms. BDU has demonstrated a firm stance against violations of ethical norms and standards in conducting research. Some faculty members and graduate students at BDU were penalized in the past for unethical research practices. In addition to reprimanding or penalizing faculty members and students who violate ethical research and publication norms, higher education institutions in Ethiopia should also support faculty members and students in conducting research ethically. Unless we ensure that the research conducted by faculty members and students is ethical, the reputation and credibility of higher education institutions will be at stake.

It is time to shift our focus from merely increasing research output to ensuring that research is conducted ethically. Issues related to research and publication ethics should be incorporated into advanced research courses offered to postgraduate students at BDU. Moreover, enhancing faculty members' awareness and understanding of the importance of conducting and publishing research ethically should become a regular focus of seminars organized for that purpose. In addition, periodicals addressing research and publication ethics could be prepared and distributed to faculty members and graduate students. Faculty members should also be familiar with the tell-tale signs of a research report that might have been done unethically and be trained on what to do when they encounter such reports. Moreover, editors of academic journals published by higher education institutions in Ethiopia should spearhead efforts to ensure that the manuscripts they publish adhere to research ethics standards, and these editors should also be supported in their efforts to uphold research ethics.

The editorial team of *Bahir Dar Journal of Education* has embarked on the long journey of ensuring that the articles published by the journal demonstrate high standards of research ethics. The team has done everything possible to ensure that the articles published in Volume

26, Issue 2, were conducted ethically. This effort will continue until we ensure that conducting research ethically becomes a norm among faculty members and students.

The articles featured in Volume 26, Issue 2, collectively address some of the most pressing concerns in contemporary education: instructional leadership, curriculum implementation, pedagogical competence, assessment practices, technology-enhanced learning, educational aid, teacher knowledge, and the availability of instructional resources. Although the studies are situated in different educational contexts across Africa, particularly Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Nigeria, they converge around a common theme—the need to strengthen educational quality through effective leadership, innovative pedagogy, informed assessment practices, and institutional support.

In the opening article, Joyce Exusper Nemes examines instructional leadership practices among heads of public schools in Tanzania through a narrative review of studies published between 2014 and 2025. Nemes identifies five central dimensions of instructional leadership, including goal setting, instructional supervision, curriculum coordination, professional development, and the optimization of learning environments. The review reveals that while some school leaders demonstrate alignment with established instructional leadership frameworks, many continue to struggle with administrative overload, limited professional capacity, and inadequate resources. The study highlights the continuing importance of strengthening leadership preparation and institutional support systems to improve school effectiveness.

Questions of educational quality are also central in the study by David Adeyemi Aladesuyi, Florence Omosholape Abidoye, Zubairu Bio Salihu, and Adekunle Omotayo Abidoye, who evaluate the implementation of the senior secondary mathematics curriculum in Niger State, Nigeria, using the CIPP model. Their findings indicate that although curriculum objectives and content coverage were generally satisfactory and most teachers possessed appropriate qualifications, implementation remained hindered by insufficient use of student-centered teaching approaches, inconsistent use of instructional materials, and limited practical assessment practices. The study demonstrates that effective curriculum implementation depends not only on curriculum design but also on the pedagogical processes and classroom practices through which the curriculum is enacted.

The importance of assessment practices in supporting mathematical understanding is further explored by Girma Tessema, Kassa Michael, and Solomon Areaya. Focusing on geometry learning at Robe College of Teacher Education, the authors investigate how assessment-for-learning practices contribute to pre-service teachers' mathematization. Their findings suggest that although assessment-for-learning strategies were commonly used, they often failed to capture the depth of learners' mathematical reasoning and conceptual understanding. However, the incorporation of dialogue, argumentation, and varied formative assessment strategies created opportunities for deeper reasoning and abstraction. The study contributes to ongoing discussions about the role of assessment in fostering higher-order mathematical thinking.

Teacher competence and pedagogical content knowledge are examined in the study by Wendiyafray Wanna and Abate Anjulo, who investigate English language teachers' proficiency and pedagogical content knowledge. Their findings reveal moderate levels of language proficiency and pedagogical competence among teachers, alongside important deficiencies in

fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and communicative classroom practices. The study raises critical concerns regarding teacher preparedness and emphasizes the need for continuous professional development, improved working conditions, and institutional support for teachers.

Innovative instructional approaches receive significant attention in this issue. Alemayehu Anbess Gebremeskel, Mulugeta Atinafu Ayele, and Adem Mohammed Ahmed examine the effects of the VHGGDIA on students' motivation to learn plane geometry. Their quasi-experimental study demonstrates that the intervention significantly improved students' motivation and engagement. The authors further show that successful implementation requires supportive conditions such as manageable class sizes, adequate time, sufficient learning space, and access to instructional resources. Similarly, Mersha Minwuyelet Kassa, Mulugeta Kibret Azen, Solomon Melese Mengstie and Melaku Wale Ferede investigate the impact of interactive multimedia and differentiated instruction on students' biology multimedia attitudes. The study reveals that multimedia-supported differentiated instruction significantly enhanced students' attitudes toward learning biology and created more active and engaging learning environments. Importantly, the findings also indicate that the instructional strategy was free from gender bias, reinforcing its broader pedagogical value.

Broader systemic and policy concerns are addressed in the article by Jerusalem Yibeltal Yizengaw and Asnake Tarekgn Nigussie, who explore the effectiveness and challenges of international educational aid delivered by UNESCO-Ethiopia. Using the Theory of Change and the principles of the Paris Declaration as analytical frameworks, the study reveals important tensions between policy intentions and implementation realities. The authors identify challenges related to responsiveness, coordination, and the inclusion of vulnerable populations, while also drawing attention to the relatively limited focus on tertiary education. Their recommendations for greater stakeholder engagement and coordinated educational support provide important insights for educational development initiatives.

Teacher knowledge and pedagogical understanding are further explored by Workineh Birhanu Aynalem, Tiruwork Tamiru Tolla, and Amare Sahle Abebe, whose narrative review maps the development of pedagogical knowledge research in Ethiopia from 1986 to 2024. The review demonstrates that Ethiopian scholarship has focused predominantly on pedagogical content knowledge, while general pedagogical knowledge has received comparatively limited attention despite its significance in addressing challenges such as large class sizes and learner diversity. The study provides an important foundation for future research on teacher education and professional knowledge in Ethiopia.

Assessment orientation among teacher educators is critically examined by Tiruneh Ewunetu, Amare Sahile, and Tiruwork Tamiru. Their mixed-methods study conducted in colleges of teacher education in the Amhara region reveals misconceptions and inadequate implementation of assessment practices, particularly formative assessment before and during instruction. Structural challenges such as heavy workloads, large classes, and traditional assessment mindsets further constrained effective assessment practices. The findings underscore the urgent need for institutional reforms and professional development initiatives aimed at strengthening formative assessment culture in teacher education institutions.

Resource limitations and learning environments are also highlighted in the study by Abate Mengistu Gessese and Alebachew Kemisso Haybano, who investigate the implementation of performing and visual arts education in Ethiopian primary schools. Their

findings reveal that shortages of art materials and dedicated instructional spaces significantly hinder the implementation of performing and visual arts curricula. The study reminds us that creativity and artistic learning require not only curriculum inclusion but also material and spatial support.

Finally, Basha Bekele, Solomon Lema, and Asfaw Gnefeto examine middle school citizenship teachers' pedagogical perspectives in Sidama Regional State. Their findings reveal an important contradiction between teachers' stated preference for constructivist pedagogies and their continued reliance on traditional classroom practices. The study illustrates the persistent gap between pedagogical ideals and classroom realities and points to the contextual constraints that shape instructional practice.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue provide a rich and multifaceted examination of educational practice and policy in African contexts. The studies collectively reveal that meaningful educational improvement depends not only on curriculum reform or policy development, but also on effective leadership, teacher competence, assessment literacy, instructional innovation, resource availability, and institutional support. They further demonstrate the interconnectedness of these dimensions and the importance of addressing educational challenges holistically.

We hope that the insights gleaned from this issue will kindle further scholarly discussion, inform educational policy and practice, and contribute to ongoing efforts to enhance teaching, learning, and educational leadership across diverse educational settings.

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