BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
My Research Granary101 Series

The Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS) plays a critical role in the realization of the university's mandate through the provision of a supportive ecosystem that promotes postgraduate students' research excellence. *My Research Granary*101 is a series of simplified write-ups by Dr. Jackson Ndolo, that seek to build research capacity among KCA university postgraduate students, however, the information may be of help to any researcher who wishes to improve their academic writing skills. The current write-up provides a justification why postgraduate students in Africa should undertake research. My Research Granary101 number 3 of 2025 looks at;

Crafting a Fundable and Commercialisable Research Title:
A Guide for Young Scholars in Business, Education, and Technology in Kenya

1.0 Introduction

If you've ever sat in a research seminar or struggled with your dissertation/thesis proposal, you've probably heard someone casually say, *"Si ni research tu?"* But the truth is, in Kenya, especially for scholars in business, education, and technology research can be much more than just an academic exercise. It can be something that gets funded, gets used, and even earns money. Getting research funded is not easy. If you want your work to actually matter, to go beyond the classroom and influence real people, real policies, or real products, you have to stand out by starting with a title that promises value.

Fundable research means that a research idea or project is attractive enough for someone such as a donor, government, university, NGO, or investor to give you money to carry it out. In simpler terms, fundable research is work that someone else believes is:

a) Important (solves a real problem),

b) Relevant (aligned with their mission or priorities),

c) Feasible (can be done with the resources available), and

Commercialisable means that a product, idea, service, or research outcome has the potential to be turned into a business opportunity something that can be sold, licensed, or otherwise generate revenue or value in the market. If your research can produce something that people will pay for, adopt, or invest in then it is commercialisable. In research, a commercialisable title or project is one whose results can be:

a) Used to create a product (e.g., a mobile app, textbook, software)
b) Sold to an audience (e.g., schools, SMEs, NGOs, governments)
c) Licensed to companies (e.g., a patented solution or algorithm)
d) Scaled as a service (e.g., a training model or decision-making tool)

In summary a fundable project attracts support. A commercialisable one creates something people will use or buy.

2.0 The Research Title

A great research title is not just academic; it is the researchers first promise. It tells people what problem the researcher is solving, for whom, and how. If you can get that across clearly, you'll stand out, whether you're applying for a grant, pitching a startup, or submitting a dissertation or thesis.

2.1 Elements of a Fundable Title

In a simplistic manner; A good title is one that grabs attention from funders, policy experts, or industry stakeholders. It has four key ingredients according to World Bank (2020);

a) It solves a real problem (not just a theoretical one).
b) It offers something usable—a model, tool, app, system, framework.
c) It's innovative, especially in how it applies or adapts to the local context.
d) It can grow or scale, ideally across counties or sectors

2.2 Ground the work in local realities

Your research must speak to societal; e.g. Kenya's current needs. If not it is going to struggle to get attention. Kenya is dealing with challenges like the roll-out of the Competency-Based

Curriculum (CBC), a push for digital innovation, MSME struggles, youth unemployment, and the post-COVID 19 economy. These are not just academic topics, they are *funding magnets* if approached thoughtfully. Research that aligns with Kenya Vision 2030, the Big 4 Agenda, the Digital Economy Blueprint, or county strategic plans tends to attract more partners and supporters (Republic of Kenya, 2007; Ministry of ICT, 2019).

3.0 Proposed Research Titles

The section provides some examples of fundable and commercialisable research titles in the three domains.

a). Business Research Titles: From Boardrooms to Boda Bodas

Kenya's business landscape is vibrant but challenging. MSMEs, SACCOs, youth startups, and supply chains all face issues that technology and strategy can help solve. Here are sample titles across key sub-disciplines:

i)   Accounting & Finance

- *"Designing an Artificial Intelligence-Powered Audit Risk Tool for SACCOs in Kiambu"*
- *"A Mobile Micro-Savings App for Boda Boda Riders in Kisumu County"*
- *"An Inclusive Credit Scoring Framework for Women-Led Startups in Kenya"*

ii)   Human Resource Management

- *"Using Gamification to Boost Employee Engagement in Nairobi Hotels"*
- *"Predicting Staff Turnover Using Human Resource Analytics in Kenyan Tech Startups"*

iii)   Strategic Management

- *"A Resilience Strategy Toolkit for SMEs Facing Economic Shocks Post-COVID 19"*
- *"A Competitive Intelligence Dashboard for Local Retail Chains"*

iv)   Procurement, Logistics & SCM

- *"Building a Blockchain-Based Tender Transparency System for Counties in Kenya"*
- *"Optimising Last-Mile Vaccine Delivery in Remote Areas Using IoT"*

These titles show exactly who the research is for, what it intends to create or fix, and how it can add value beyond academia.

b) Education Research Titles: Teaching, Learning, Leading

Education in Kenya is transforming fast. Between CBC, digital inclusion, and the growing demand for mental health and inclusive practices, there's plenty of room for impactful research.

i) **Educational Media & EdTech**
- *"Developing an Offline App for CBC Science Lessons in Turkana County"*
- *"A WhatsApp-Based Revision Platform for Students in Low-Bandwidth Regions"*

ii) **Curriculum Studies**
- *"Co-Creating a Localised CBC Curriculum on Indigenous Agriculture in Kisii County"*
- *"Evaluating Integration of Indigenous Knowledge in Junior Secondary Subjects"*

iii) **Pedagogy**
- *"Gamifying Mathematics for Lower Primary Learners in Nairobi's Informal Settlements"*
- *"An Adaptive Teaching Toolkit for CBC Classrooms with Learner Diversity"*

iv) **Education Administration**
- *"A Mobile Dashboard for School Inspectors to Monitor CBC Implementation"*
- *"Improving Transparency in School Finances Through a Mobile Reporting System"*

v) **Educational Psychology**
- *"Creating a Mental Health Screening Tool for University Students in Kenya"*
- *"A Toolkit to Build Emotional Intelligence in Adolescents in Machakos"*

Titles like these are practical, context-aware, and invite collaboration from education stakeholders, NGOs, and county governments.

c). Technology Research Titles: From Labs to Life

Technology is Kenya's rising star especially mobile innovation, data science, and digital platforms. But technology research must solve local problems, not just chase buzzwords.

i) **Data Science & Analytics**
- *"Predicting Urban Flood Hotspots in Nairobi Using Satellite Data and Machine Learning"*
- *"A Data-Driven Health Resource Allocation Tool for Rural Clinics in Western Kenya"*

ii) **Computer Science & IT**
- *"An AI-Based Code Grader for Secondary School Students Under CBC"*
- *"Developing a Cybersecurity Risk Predictor for Small Fintechs in Kenya"*

iii) Geomatics / Geospatial Science

- *"Designing a GIS-Based Conflict Mapping Tool for Land Use in Narok County"*
- *"A Drone-Based Crop Health Monitoring System for Tea Estates in Kericho"*

iv) Information Systems & Platforms

- *"Building a Citizen Feedback App for Infrastructure Projects in Nairobi"*
- *"A Mobile-Based Water Use Tracker for Urban Informal Settlements"*

These titles balance technology with purpose ideal for both research grants and startup acceleration.

4.0 A simple tool for crafting a great research title

I propose the following simple template that I use to craft research titles

"Developing a **[tool/model/system]** for **[target group]** in **[location]** to **[solve a specific problem]**"

Examples:

- *"Developing a Solar-Powered E-Learning Hub for CBC Schools in Garissa"*
- *"A Mobile Mental Health Tool for University Students in Nairobi"*

Always remember to start your title with action verbs; *Developing, Designing, Evaluating, Implementing*, enhancing to make it feel alive and purposeful.

In summary to sharpen your research title:

i. Start with a verb: e.g., *Designing, Developing, Deploying, Evaluating*
ii. Name your innovation: model, tool, app, platform, framework
iii. Specify your audience or users: teachers, farmers, SMEs, students, policymakers
iv. Include a location: this adds specificity and practical value
v. Point to the problem or solution: what is being fixed or improved?

5.0 Sources of Ideas for Research Titles

Here are ten practical, grounded, and ways to find your next powerful research title with examples;

a). Problems around you

Sometimes the best research idea is right under your nose. Talk to the Mama Mboga, the Cyber Café guy, or even your aunt who runs a wholesale shop. Ask: *"What's the one thing that slows you down every day?"*

For example: After a few conversations with riders in Eldoret, you discover many have no way to track income or fuel usage. This becomes:

"Designing a Mobile-Based Financial Tracker for Boda Boda Operators in Uasin Gishu County"

This is a problem that matters, and a solution that someone could actually use and pay for.

b. What is Kenya trying to fix

Kenya's development goals like those in *Vision 2030* or the *Digital Economy Blueprint* are full of inspiration. If your research solves a problem the government is already trying to solve, it's easier to get support.

For example: The Ministry of Education is struggling to get CBE materials to remote schools. That inspires:

"Developing an Offline Digital Content Library for CBE Teachers in Mandera County"

That's a solution not just for a dissertation/thesis, but for the Ministry, NGOs, and tech partners too (Republic of Kenya, 2007; Ministry of ICT, 2019).

c). Follow the Money and Data

Industry reports often highlight big pain points where businesses are losing money or efficiency. These are great places to craft titles.

For Example in Logistics: After reading a report from Shippers Council of East Africa on port delays, you design:

"Using Data Analytics to Optimise Container Clearance at the Port of Mombasa"

For example in Human Resource Management: A human resource survey shows poor employee retention in county hospitals from a Kenya National Bureau of Statistics report of 2020. You may propose:

"Examining the Impact of Work-Life Balance on Nurse Retention in Nairobi County Public Hospitals"

d). Talk to the People Living the Problem

Spend a day at a school, a logistics company, a county office, or even a Jua Kali garage. Ask: *"If someone could invent something to make your work easier, what would it be?"*

An example in Education Administration: A headteacher says CBE paperwork is too much. That becomes:

"Designing a CBE Records Automation Tool for Headteachers in Trans Nzoia"

An example in technology - GIS/Geomatics: A county planner explains challenges in waste mapping. You create:

"Developing a GIS-Based Smart Waste Collection System for Urban Settlements in Kisumu County"

Please note here you're not guessing but solving a real problem someone has.

e). Dig into Dissertations/Thesis and Journal Articles

Other scholars have already written thousands of pages. You just need to look at what they missed.

For exxample: You review 10 theses on digital banking but notice none focus on the elderly. Boom your title is:

"Usability and Adoption of Mobile Banking among Older Adults in Nyeri County"

You're not just being smart but you're being strategic.

f). Use Kenya's Open Data

Don't ignore free data Sites like opendata.go.ke and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) offer datasets on health, education, agriculture, and more.

For example in Technology -Data Science: You notice a trend in school dropout data and propose:

"Predicting Dropout Risks in Kenyan Secondary Schools Using Machine Learning Models"

g). Attend Hackathons, Pitch Competitions and Innovation Weeks

These events are goldmines for emerging problems and fresh thinking. Just listening to the problems being pitched can spark your research idea. KCA University offers our students all this opportunities.

For example in Technology -Information Systems: After attending KCA University Innovation Week 2025, you notice many startups need affordable inventory software. That inspires:

"Designing a Cloud-Based Inventory System for Micro-Retailers in Eastlands, Nairobi"

h). Localise global trends

Sure, AI is big globally. But how about AI that understands *Swahili* or *local dialects*?

For example in Technology - (AI:

"Developing a Swahili-Enabled Chatbot for First-Time Mothers Accessing Reproductive Health Information in Rural Kenya"

Now you've combined innovation with cultural context—a powerful combo for funding and commercial use.

i). Study what funders want

Funders like Mastercard Foundation, GIZ, and USAID are very clear about their research interests. Read their calls or funded projects, then tailor make your work to match.

For example in Business - Finance: Mastercard is interested in youth employment. So you write:

"A Digital Platform for Matching TVET Graduates to Entry-Level Jobs in Nakuru County"

For example in Education -Media: UNICEF wants digital inclusion for children. You write:

"Creating Edutainment Videos to Support Literacy for Refugee Children in Kakuma"

j). Your own pain could be the world's solution

Maybe you've struggled to analyse your SPSS data, or keep losing your field receipts. Don't ignore your own frustrations they could lead to a solution that others need too.

Personal example: You build an app for expense tracking during fieldwork. Now your title is:

"Developing a Mobile Expense Management App for Graduate Field Researchers in Kenya"

You're solving your own problem and others' too.

6.0 More Tips

When developing a title always go for what interests you. People put more effort to achieve what they like. They can also spend a lot of their time and other resources to achieve the goal. Check out if you have the necessary knowledge and skills to accomplish the research. Sometimes you may need to acquire new knowledge and skills so as to undertake the research successfully.

In conclusion, remember that you are not just writing to impress an examiner. You're building something that can help a community, power a business, or shape policy. Kenya needs that. Africa needs that too. So think bigger. Frame your research like the impactful project it can become. Your title is not just a heading, it's a **door opener**.

References

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NOTE: *My Research Granary101/03/2025 will present Developing a Research Concept Note/paper*

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