



Organisational Barriers and Bottlenecks to Research and Innovation

Dr Pamisha Pillay
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Key Challenges facing R&I in SADC

*SADC Workshop on Research and Innovation Management
(Centurion, March 2012)*

1. Lack of financial and infrastructural resources both at national and institutional level
2. Fragmentation and lack of prioritisation and co-ordination of R&I on national and institutional level
3. Lack of networking and collaboration at various levels including within and between institutions, within and between institutions, within and between SADC countries, with industry and with research management and other organisations supporting capacity development in research management



Key Challenges facing R&I in SADC

4. Limited capacity and underperformance of research institutes (critical mass of researchers, no. of PG students, limited contribution to global output, no. of skilled RM's & visionary institutional leadership)

5. SADC is losing too many of its skilled R&I capacity to developed countries – brain drain

6. Limited skills and tools available for monitoring & evaluation of R&I performance



Key Challenges facing R&I in SADC

7. Lack of the following related to intellectual property and technology transfer:

- Knowledge and support structures;
- Funding;
- Human resources;
- Policy (or where policies exist they often are outdated); and
- Cooperation between all government departments responsible for IP and TT.

8. There exists a gap between researchers/institutions and policy makers.



Funding

- There is just not enough to go around!
- Internal funds directed to “more urgent” priorities
- Organizations often work on annual funding cycles that don’t match up well with real-world opportunities
- Under-funding of new ideas in the name of sustaining current efforts



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Funding

- Competitive funding favours the well established researcher with track record
- Skills to identify and secure grants are limited
- Resource-constrained universities struggle to attract donor funding
- Insufficient support – perception that government/management favour teaching over research

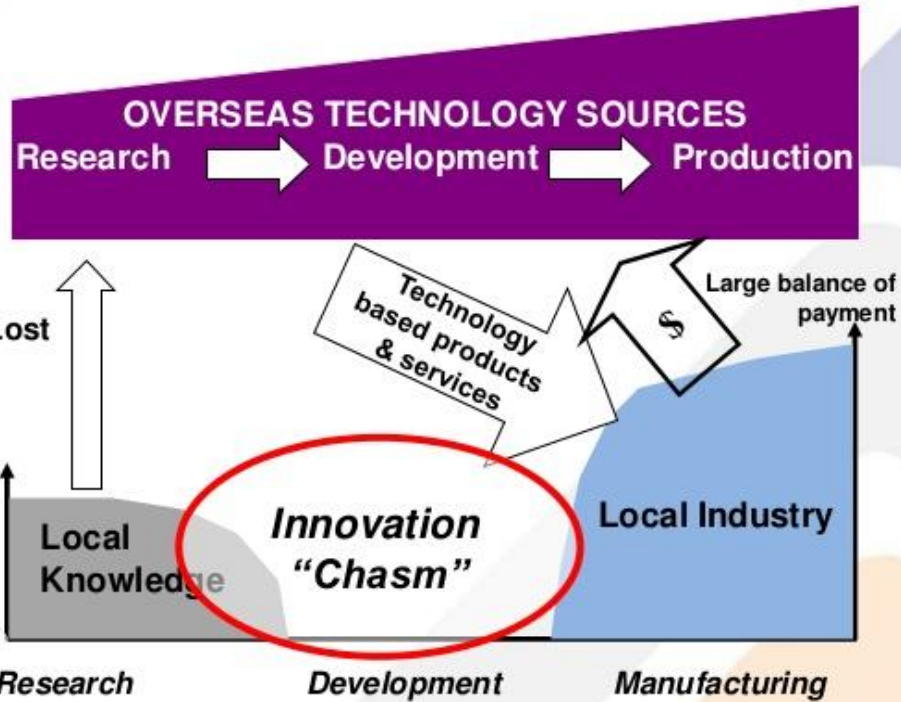


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The “Innovation Chasm”



The Innovation chasm challenge



06 Dec 2011

Lungile Shoba-Zikhali

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Organisational Strategy



- Without formal strategies and policies in place formulated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders, the environment will not be enabling or supportive to research and innovation or the management thereof
- Lack of shared vision and purpose across organisation
- Short-term thinking/focus, priorities shift



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Organisational Structure

- TT not always seen as core function of an institution
- University Research offices with centralised services (RM, TT, PG affairs, internal funds, grants, commercial contracts) - lack of focus and dilution of efforts
- Blurring of boundaries between research support and university advancement activities
- Internal process focus rather than client focus



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Organisational Structure

- Creation of boundaries, assigning responsibilities and putting rules & restrictions in place tend to stifle innovation at researcher level, which by nature tends to cross boundaries
- Internal bureaucracy and hierarchy issues – red tape and micromanagement
- Power struggles – clash of ego's



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Risk Aversion

- General belief that innovation is inherently risky!
- Focus on successes of the past rather than challenges of the future
- Unwillingness to acknowledge and learn from past failures
- Rewarding crisis management rather than crisis prevention



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Risk Aversion

- Underfunding of new ideas or people in effort to stick with the known and “trustworthy”
- RM’s fear that criticising current practices and “rocking the boat” is high-risk activity
- Researchers fear publishing because of peer scrutiny
- Researchers avoid collaboration – fear of losing their ideas and sharing the credit/recognition



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Skills, resources & time constraints

- University focus on students and teaching – tension between role as teacher & researcher
- Academics are busy (teaching, PG supervision) – limited time to focus on R&I initiatives
- Inadequate facilities and resources – labs, technical support, access to on-line journals, etc.
- Lack of incentives – reward & recognition programmes for contract research & innovation outputs are lacking or inadequate



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Skills, resources & time constraints

- Inadequate training and capacity development of R&I managers/administrators – not yet a fully fledged profession with structured developmental pathway
- R&I offices are often under-resourced – difficult to specialise, dilution of efforts



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Skills, resources & time constraints

- Too much admin – not enough strategic thinking and planning
- Legal offices – bottleneck in contract execution
- Regulatory hurdles



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RESEARCH

What are your bottle-necks and how are you addressing them?



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Contact us through our website : www.sarima.co.za

Acknowledgements:
Jose Jackson-Malete
SARIMA President

Corline Kriel, Co-ordinator
Tel: +27 12 8413329
sarima@sarima.co.za