

In August 2006, the Informatics and Knowledge Management Directorate held a workshop on Knowledge Translation and Open Access, at the MRC in Cape Town. Below is the summary of Dr. A Paterson's presentation in the workshop:

NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND MANAGEMENT POLICY

Dr. Paterson noted the value of Umyezo (a newsletter on Informatics and Knowledge Management produced by MRC's IKMD) and remarked that it was worth much more than R100 per year which is the current subscription fee. He quoted from Umyezo, particularly regarding the types of university and the trend towards employing academic staff on a casual basis. Such issues are reflecting the kind of leadership needed in the country. Dr Paterson urged that Umyezo should be disseminated widely, as it is essential that this newsletter should be read. Although the IKMD of the MRC may view these KM steps as small, in the end, they will make a tremendous impact.

Organisations are cautioned not to stay in the old paradigm of research; they need a new paradigm, reflecting the international knowledge economy. It is important to think about the future in new ways and ask questions, such as

- Do we know how research is going to change?
- Was the idea of the Nobel Laureate one of those who changes the world along PhD lines?
- Should we only be thinking about current PhDs or post-publication PhDs in future?

Furthermore, Dr Paterson indicated that we really need publication and synthesis.

We need to be moving towards large-scale research and innovation (rather than operating individually, like viruses). We need researchers who can work across boundaries and with other researchers. An example is, the collaborative research of young scientists working in the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), who achieve a number of objectives. There is a unique opportunity for health research to be the equivalent to the SKA – rather than the current “DSTV dishes”, i.e., the many different uncoordinated small research projects. If the suggestion of SKA is adopted by health research, it will mean a change in the way people are taught, changes regarding ethical issues including approaches to data and knowledge sharing. The overall approach should be how to conquer disease, rather than which research can be done to optimise careers.

The issue of data and repositories is not a trivial issue. Proper planning and implementation is needed and it should be given the importance it deserves. He moved on to talk about the New Age of the iPod world, and how people can no longer live without iPods!!

One could do the whole school curriculum via podcast for each subject; the teacher could become the facilitator. He continued highlighting areas that need research pilots for adoption such as:

- SANReN
- Open Access repositories
- Google world – World Wind

- eLearning
- mLearning and
- eResearch

He touched on some of the issues needing attention such as:

- Evaluation and impact assessment
- ASSAf publications report (2006)
- R&D survey – more researchers, but not improved productivity
- MRC IHE
- Government performance is inconsistent!
- Studies: nothing wrong with the people, but we do have problems with linking people appropriately.

Factors missing in all research agenda, Dr Paterson highlighted as:

- Leadership-driven initiatives
- ‘Generosity’ approach – but not false generosity
- Continuous improvement
- Proper foresight
- Enough experimenting
- A community of practice
- A common platform.

