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Research driven Innovation: A collaborative approach for developing countries' research Uptake

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This paper aimed at assessing the impact of the pre-incubation approach to students' ideas uptake at the University of Dar es Salaam and establishes a framework with which the research uptake can follow suit. The first part of the paper describes the pre-incubation process, achievements and lesson learned. The second part establishes a link between research uptake and the UDICTI pre-incubation processes and proposes a framework that will tap from the research works in the sub-Saharan Africa region to provide products and solutions through a research driven innovation.

The study reviewed the rationale and approach to the pre-incubation process at the University of Dar Es Salaam ICT incubator (UDICTI) and established the success stories and challenges which emerged from the process. Data was collected through interview, questionnaires and bench review of the UDICTI's processes, tools and achievements repository. Questionnaires were distributed online to a sample of 50 students who had gone through the programme during the 2011-2016 period. A number of 10 UDICTI coaches who had participated in the programme during that period were also interviewed in order to supplement and corroborate the survey and repository review results.

The study found that, during 2011-2016 period, UDICTI approached over 1000 University students to participate in the pre-incubation programme whereby over 200 students were trained, coached and mentored. It was also established that, over 20 minimum viable products have been developed with five (5) companies and/or solutions either in existence or in their final stages of development. The study also found that through the process, UDICTI has created relationships with local stakeholders in the innovation ecosystem including governmental units, local incubators and innovation hubs, and national projects working on ICT and innovation. Through collaboration with KTH, UDICTI also conducted Phase II of the World Bank Negawatt challenge which included an acceleration program for two local teams whereby Team STIC went on to participate in the finale in Barcelona, Spain in 2015 and became the overall global winner. The study also found that one of the major challenges that UDICTI faces, is lack of fund and equipment for incubatees to prototype their initial businesses.

The study proposes a framework that builds on what UDICTI has achieved, and brings together the industry, research institutions, non-governmental and public agencies to solve the existing challenges and generate ideas on solving the societal and industrial issues. The framework involves an ICT platform that virtually connects the stakeholders to contribute to the idea bank and face-to-face forums where stakeholders meet and strategize on different regulatory and technical issues. The ripe ideas coming out of the framework are used by the incubation programmes to develop solutions and also feed into government policies. It is expected that the framework will be able to stimulate the development of the innovation ecosystem within the country by empowering institutions that are key contributors to the innovation ecosystem structure in the country.

Summary

This research paper aims at establishing a research uptake framework that will enable research driven innovation in Tanzania and provide a baseline for the same for other developing countries—especially sub-Saharan African countries. Based on a work done in grooming the university students' ideas to ICT products and services, the paper proposes a framework that ensures a countrywide/regionwide catchment as well as enabling collaboration between different stakeholders through the ICT platform. The expected outputs include dissemination and use of research results, and development of solutions/services ideas based on the research

knowledge shared. The expected impacts include businesses establishment and government policies improvement/establishment.

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