

ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE FOR THE DEVELOPING WORLD ZIMBABWE NATIONAL
CHAPTER



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Report

Bridging the gap between industry and academia

Bridging the gap between industry and academia has been a controversial issue in which organization's try to address. Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World Zimbabwe National Chapter (OWSDZNC) hosted a science talk dubbed "Bridging the gap between industry and academia", as a way to educate women, men and girls on the gaps between the industry and academia which need to be paid attention to. The presentation was delivered by Dr. Fidelis Chigondo, a lecturer at the Midlands State University who equipped the members with profound information addressing the topic.

The discussion was opened by Catherine Kazunga, OWSD Zimbabwe National Chapter Vice treasurer who gave the opening remarks. She opened with a quote by Maya Angelou "My mission in life is not merely to survive but to strive and to do so by some compassion, some humour and some style." She also gave the objectives and goals of OWSD Zimbabwe National Chapter to equip new members about the organization. The objectives and goals include: to inform women from Zimbabwe and the region about opportunities to access higher education in science (including OWSD PhD and Early Career fellowships and prizes) and to encourage and support women from Zimbabwe and the region in their careers as scientists. She also quoted Michelle Obamas famous quote, "When girls are educated, their countries become stronger and prosperous", encouraging young girls and women to share information through presenting different topics.

Dr. Fidelis Chigondo delivered a very detailed presentation addressing the topic dubbed, "bridging the gap between industry and academia". He gave an overview of the discussion topic which provoked the minds of students. He mentioned that during this third millennium technology has been advanced several times and these changes have not been embraced by students and graduates in order to compete in the present world technologies. It is therefore important to have interactions between industry and academia to impact knowledge which is sustainable in the present situations. He also highlighted the gaps between the industry and academia and what causes these gaps. Academics and industrialists have a different mindset perspectives and expectations. Most of the times the universities (academics) and industrialists are not working together in harmony because of their different perspectives. The working culture, environment and goals have been a hindrance to ensure a harmonious relationship bringing out the gap between industry and academia. Their difference in goals are a distraction as the academia is striving for recognition in form of publications, promotion to a higher education level and to publish in high impact journals whereas industry strives to survive that is to make money and be relevant in the market. The industry is more result oriented and driven whilst academia focuses on publications and theoretical knowledge.

To add on the above, Dr. Chigondo emphasized on the different goals and objectives of the industry and academia bringing out the gap. The industry prefers proven solutions with low risk whereas academia is interested in creating new solutions with high innovation rate. Industry seeks the minimum solution to minimize their risk whereas academia strives for a maximum solution to maximize their recognition. The education curriculum is not per industrial standard and are usually outdated. The business world is more practical. The student's interns are not given the environment which allows them to think widely and out of the box. Students in startup companies are likely to benefit more because these companies allow them to explore and be creative whereas in bigger companies' students end up doing routine work and there is

no more exposure. Another drawback between the academia and industry is the evaluation process. In the academia world evaluation is done based on examination grades and in the industry it is done based on performance of the students projects they have been assigned and the challenges they have faced and overcome.

More so, Dr. Chigondo advised career guidance programs which are represented by both academia and industry institutions for students to know the expectations. Lecturers and teachers should also be trained to get industrial experience so that they can trickle it down the knowledge to students. Academic institutions can also help the industry by providing consultation services especially small scale entrepreneur's. Academics should get grants from industries as a way to close the gaps. Most academics do not apply for funding from industries because of timing and deadlines associated with industry.

The presentation was concluded by Siphathisiwe Moyo, a member of the OWSDZNC who gave the closing remarks. She appreciated the executive committee for organizing the science talks to enhance the knowledge of members. She also thanked the master of ceremony Constanica Chiwera for directing the discussion and all members for participating in discussion. She highlighted on the gaps which Dr. Chigondo had touched on which cause the gap between industry and academia. We need to close the gaps between academia and industry.