

SA universities lack innovation: Pandor

South African universities are partly to blame for a lack of innovation in different industries, Science and Technology Minister Naledi Pandor said last week.



(Image: GCIS)

"Our research and development surveys show that too little local business research and development is conducted in our universities," she said at a Higher Education SA research and innovation conference in Pretoria.

"Universities have not embraced business here as they have in other countries. Professors do not see themselves as investors in start-ups and supervisors of application development."

A comparison was made to the United States, where research universities were large contributors of ideas leading to industrial innovation.

Pandor said universities continued to focus on producing talent rather than technology.

Failed!

"We have to recognise that we have failed to diversify or capitalise on local knowledge generation, and this is despite considerable expertise in sectoral systems of innovation such as mining, pulp and paper, viticulture, chemicals and telemetry."

Pandor said emerging scholars and scientists should be encouraged to develop their ideas as they were not frightened of taking risks or of failure.

"Innovation is about turning new ideas into profitable businesses."

From a business perspective, the government was encouraging innovation through a tax incentive for research and development.

Pandor said the scheme had not drawn in numbers, largely because of "bureaucratic requirements," which were changed this year to make tax claims simpler.

The government would draw up three plans to bring together universities, businesses and social innovation.

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge

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