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A Bristol university consortium

**Innovation as the panacea for Education in Africa:
Critical reflections on the Innovation for Education
fund in Rwanda and looking forward post-2015**

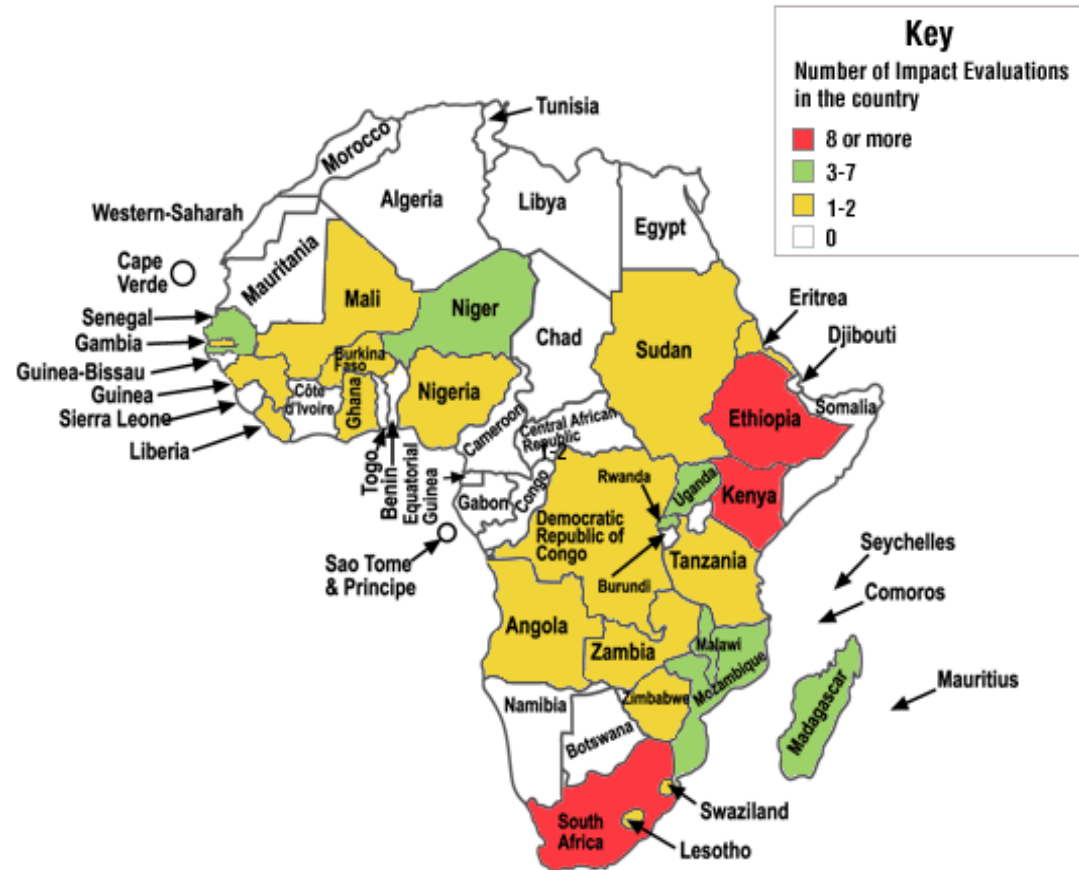
**Paper 1:
The relevance of Western Models
of Innovation for the Rwanda
Context**

Adeela ahmed Shafi

Rwanda

A small land locked country in Central Africa

- Population 11 million
- Main trade coffee and tea
- Became independent from Belgium in 1962
- Language: Kinyarwanda

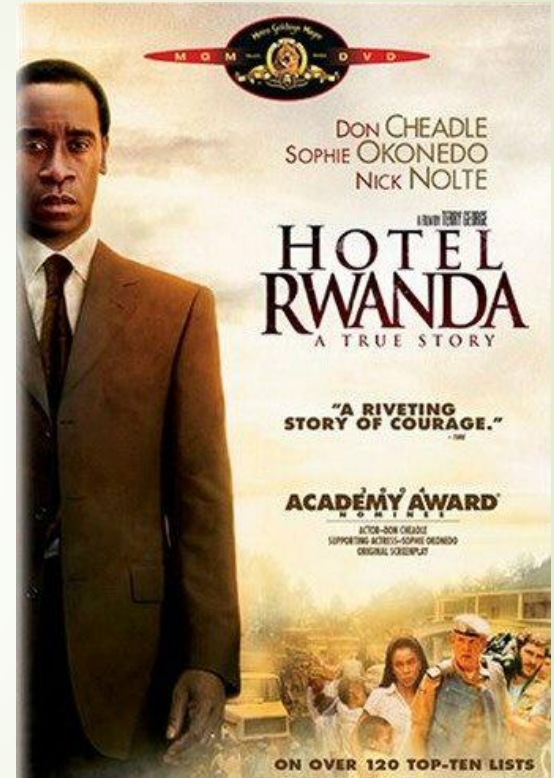


Context

- Recent History: Genocide 1994
- That the education system contributed to divisions leading up to the 1994 genocide (Obura, 2003)
- 'developmental patrimonialism' (Booth & Golooba-Mutebu, 2012)
- 22 years on - 88.2% primary school enrolment - highest in Africa. Achieved gender parity (UNESCO, 2014)
- A desire to become a knowledge economy (Ministry of Finance & Economic Planning MINECOFIN, 2009)



Rapid mass expansion in education has turned to focus on **education quality as a top priority** for the Rwandan Ministry of Education (MINEDUC)



A moving story of the genocide in 1994

Supporting Policies:

- Vision 2020
- Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP)

What is 'Innovation in education'?

'In education, innovation can contribute to improved results, help open up pupils minds'. Wong, 2012 p.2)

'great educators are natural innovators because they routinely look for inspirational ways to engage and reach their students' (Smith, Brand, & Kinash, 2013 p.67).

'I believe innovations can really make a difference and bring positive change in Rwandan classrooms'

Former Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education, Rwanda

What is 'A Hub for Innovation' (Hfi)?

Creating a culture where innovative ideas in education are recognised, fostered and rewarded

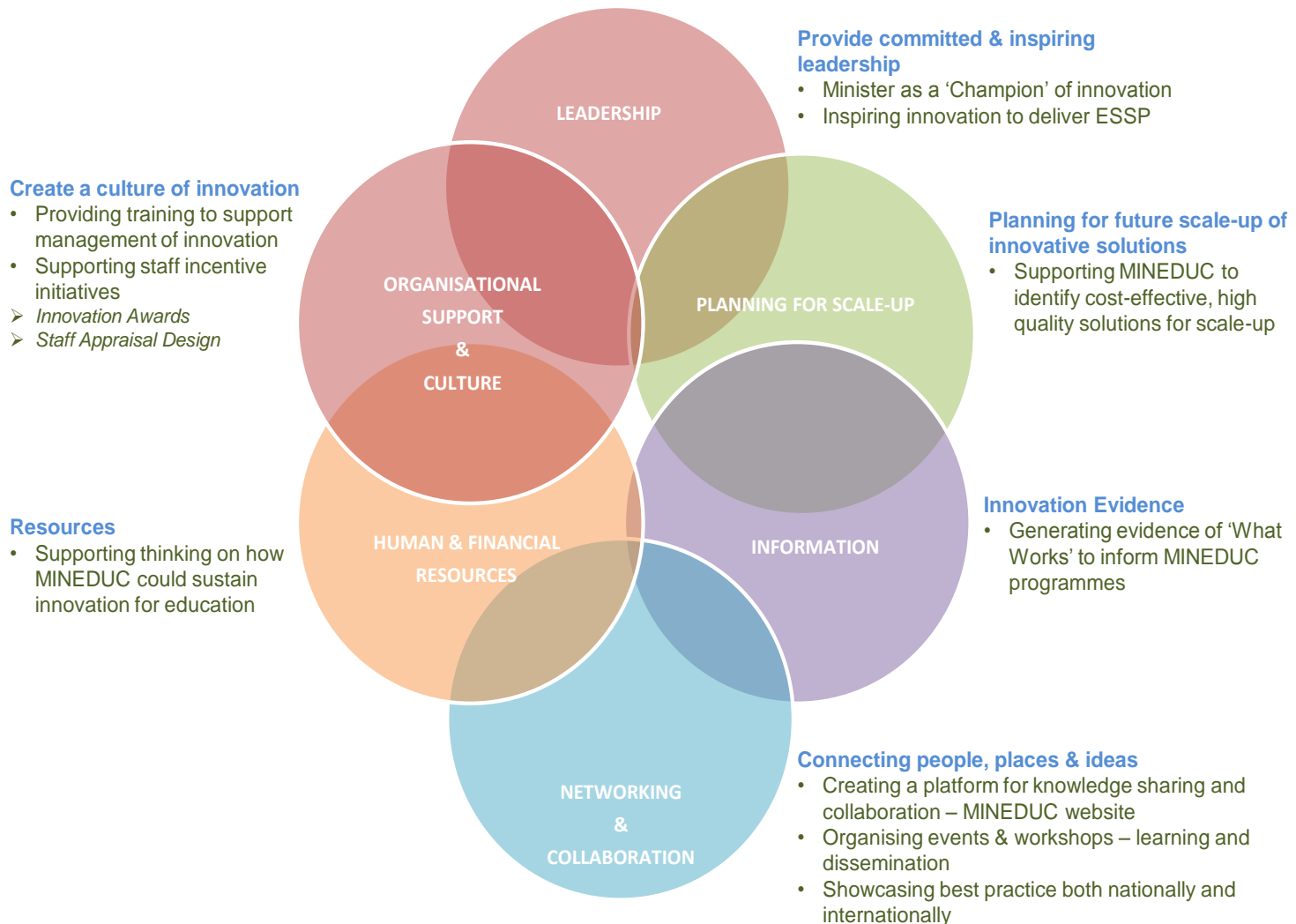
Where creativity in teaching and learning contributes to improving the quality of education



A consortium led by Bristol University (UK) working alongside MINEDUC. The activities were underpinned by the Wong Model of Innovation adopted by the development partner.

Wong Model of Innovation used to frame the Hub for Innovation project

Creating a MINEDUC Hub for Innovation



Creating a Hub for Innovation

Activities intended to embed a culture of innovation. Based on the Wong Model these were adopted for the Hfl project (Sept 2014 - Sept 2015)



1. **Masterclass** and training events for senior Ministry of Education officials so they can champion innovation
2. **5x Innovation Fairs** across Rwanda. To showcase innovative activities initiated by teachers and learners from the grass roots
3. A national **Award scheme** to reward the most innovative education activities in the country
4. **International Innovation Conference** to create hype and media interest around innovation in education in Rwanda

Data



- Diagnostic assessment of existing innovation culture within MINEDUC
- SWOC analysis with senior personnel across MINEDUC

- Interviews with 30 key personnel across MINEDUC and its agencies (REB, HEC, WDA)



Assumptions and Issues raised through the Hfl project

- An assumption of systems and structures which operate in the same way as in Western contexts
- An assumptions of risk management
- An assumption of a decentralised political system which would enable the 'culture of innovation' to flow through uninterrupted
- An assumption that Rwanda is trying to 'catch-up'
- An assumption of the suitability of western diagnostic instruments
- The role of development partners

Assumptions about systems and structures

- Systems and structures
- Flows of communication
- 'Political will' does not translate into effective systems and structures

'I have a new idea in my department and I want to ask about budgeting.... or resource experts. How can I go about it?'

Member of Rwandan
Education Board



Wong Model - domains overlap,
and interact



An assumption these exist in readiness
to be either developed or exploited
to embed a culture of innovation

Assumptions of risk management

- ▶ Innovations with the greatest potential gain are also often the ones which are most risky (Mulgan & Albury, 2003)
- ▶ All data sources identified risk as a major barrier to innovative activity. But, the diagnostic assessment was unable to identify risk management possibly because risk management is not embedded within the systems and structures.
- ▶ Link to centralised and bureaucratic nature of governance - a part of '*developmental patrimonialism*'

Innovation is
risky

Innovation is
disruptive

Innovation is
rule-
breaking



This issue of risk makes imitating innovations attractive, where risks have been tried and tested.
This comes with a cost in itself: by dropping all the risk the actual benefit of innovation is also lost.

Samoff (2013)

Assumptions of an established decentralised political system

- Consistent reference to the top down and centralised nature
- Nevertheless, recognition that on-going moves to support decentralised decision-making could eventually assist - though this would take time
- A dis-connect between top and bottom levels

'It's always a challenge because the staff are under MINELOC... which is under another line ministry and yet is implementing the business of other ministries [MINEDUC]. So it's always challenging.'

Senior MINEDUC personnel

'The culture is difficult, it is something you build over time but we can say there is the understanding of the need for this and there are some successful examples that have shown that you can do things differently to achieve results. We cannot say that everyone is on board but we are on the way.'

District Education Officer

Assumptions of 'catch-up'

- ▶ that developing economies are just 'behind' developed countries. Little consideration of what makes these economies different in nature (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012) not just scale.
- ▶ Different cultures, economies, range of languages, systems, structures and histories mean that they are not necessarily 'behind' but coming from an entirely different starting point.
- ▶ Comparing is therefore not appropriate.

Cultural effects of colonialism
(Spivak, 2003)

'reverse innovation'

Govindarajan & Trimble (2013)

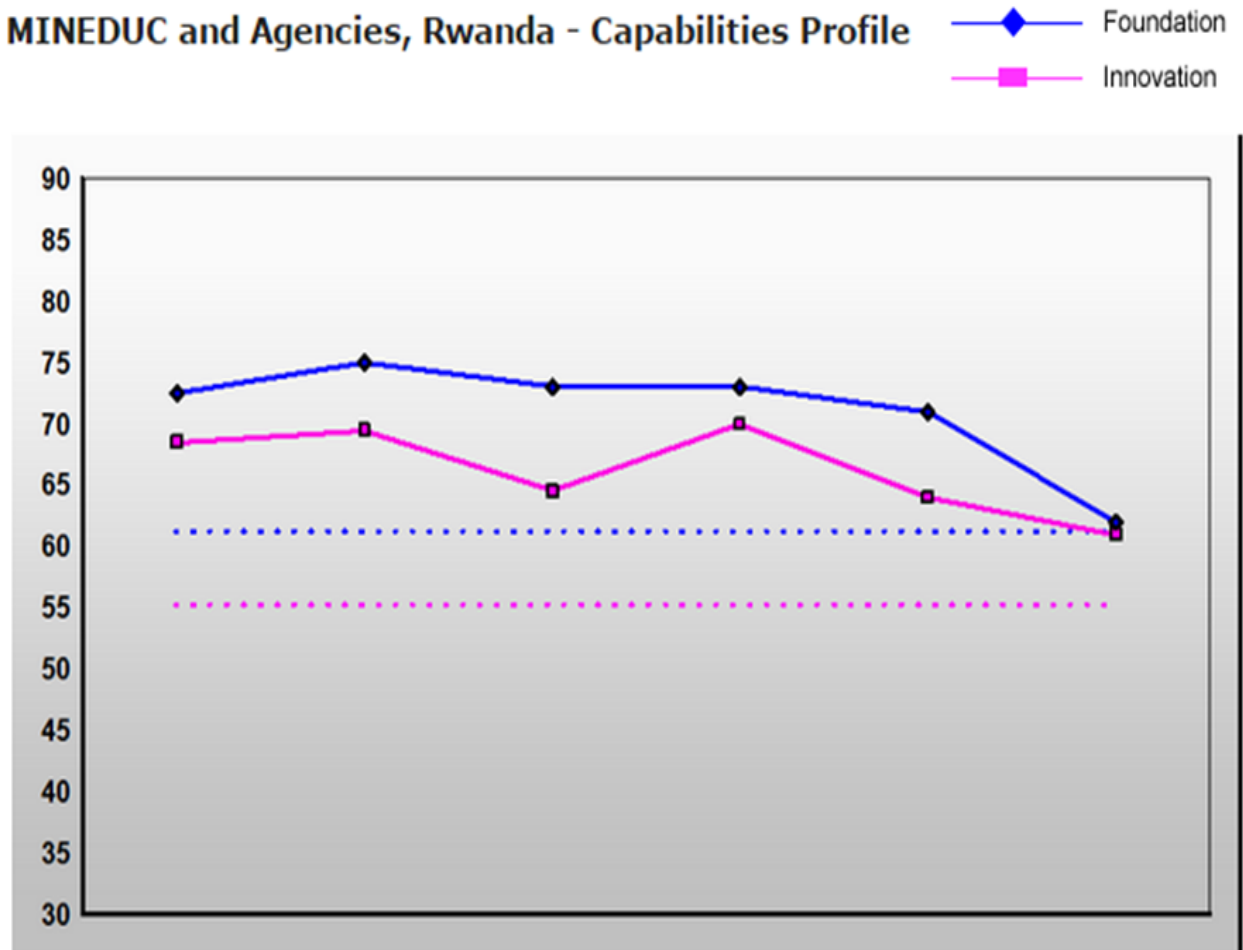
Innovations do not always begin in Western contexts.

Challenging and often resource-starved contexts mean innovations which respond to the needs of that context, often produced at a reasonable cost which is then modified and 'up-scaled' to larger or Western markets.

The suitability of Western devised instruments

- ▶ WAVE instrument never used before in developing country contexts
- ▶ Assumed knowledge of systems, structures, terminology
- ▶ As a result it produced results that were insufficient in picking up intricacies of the actual culture of innovation – except perhaps ‘political will’...

MINEDUC and Agencies, Rwanda - Capabilities Profile



Management Strategy Opportunity Scan Marketing Operations Administration
Leadership Innovation Strategy Opportunity Grow Innovation Culture Innovation Process Measure & Maintain

The role of development partners

- ▶ Development partners are rarely 'silent partners'
- ▶ Often projects are introduced and delivered by development partners (Samoff, 2013)

'Innovation requires time [...]. With the kind of responsibility structures we have it is very demanding if you work 7am – 8pm, I don't see how you are going to do a lot of innovation.'

Member of REB

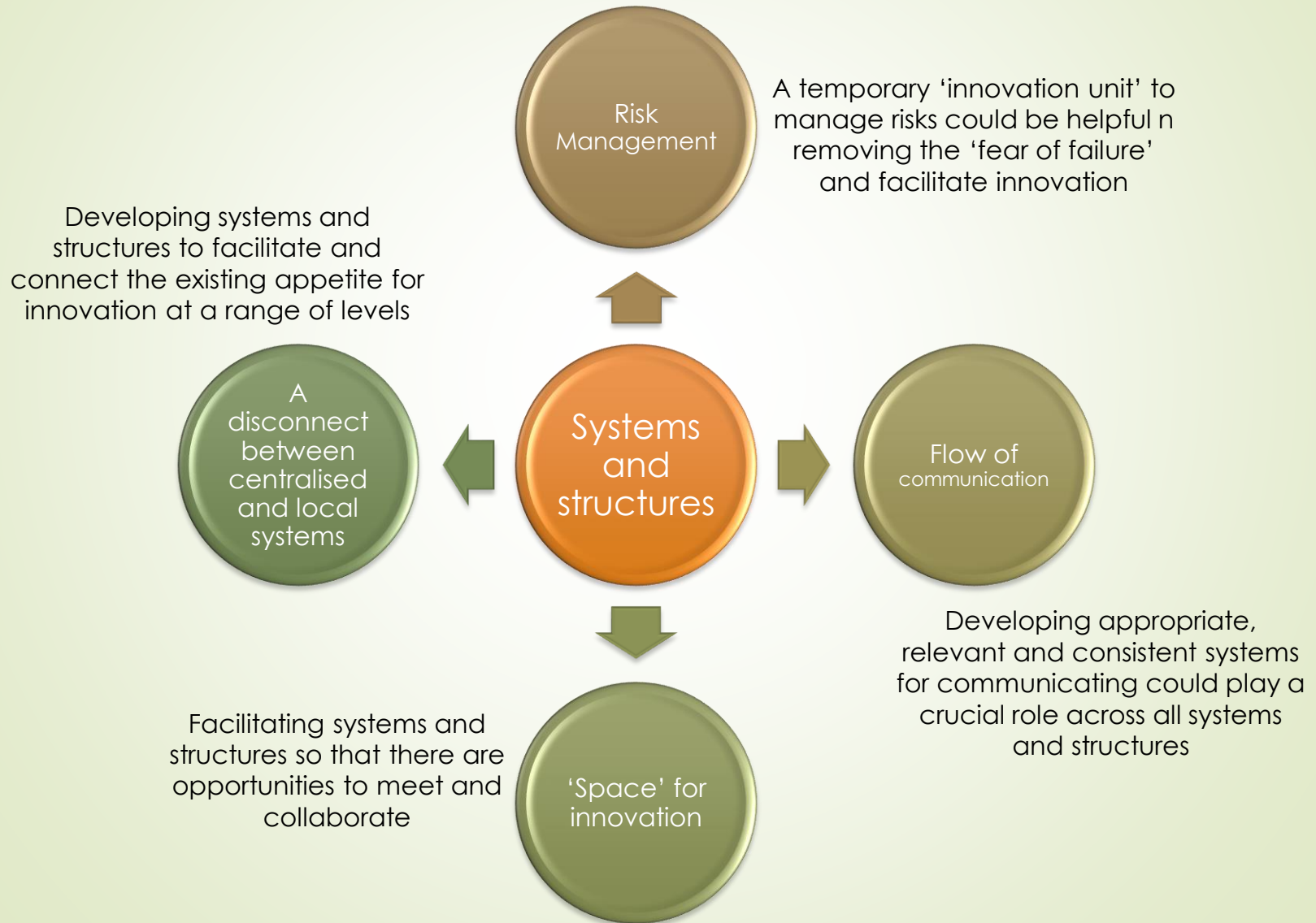
In practice, Hfl remained on the peripheries of the main commitment of personnel for a range of reasons including time.

Example:

Key documents intended for MINEDUC notably had no direct input from them

Presentation of documents framed within the Wong model of innovation rather than the issues raised or addressed.

A central role for systems and structures



Conclusions



Rwandans were recently found to be the happiest people in Africa (Gallup Positive Experience Index, 2015)

- Legacy of successful innovations in education sector
- A desire to be self-driven rather than by external agencies (Hayman 2007)
- Development partners as 'silent partners'?

'Textbook distribution: I am proud of that – there is a new decentralised textbook distribution scheme – suppliers are contracted at a national level and the supplier is paid only when the books are in schools. It is innovative and led to good results.'

Member of Rwanda Education Board

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