



SARChI
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
EDUCATION

28 June 2021

NOMINATION OF PROJECT LEADER: SLOVAKIA

This letter serves as conformation that Prof. Ing. Dr. Róbert Štefko, Ph.D. has been appointed as the project leader in Slovakia for this project.

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY:

Assessment of readiness and level of technology use of 4IR for small businesses and government

PROJECT DURATION:

1 March 2021 to 30 September 2023

GRANT INFORMATION FOR TOTAL PROJECT:

1. **Research Grant from URC (University Research Committee):** Faculty Strategic Intervention R114 510 (Cost centre is 05.05.248100.25.)
2. **National Research Foundation (NRF):** Incentive funding for rated researchers R50 000 (RA200109498457)
3. **Personal research account:** R20 000

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 4IR, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) were on an accelerated path. All economic sectors and all components of government and of communities are affected in some way by the 4IR movement. A new and growing research field is the analysis of the readiness, barriers and drivers of 4IR. This research project has its focus on this field with a focus on SMMEs and the government sector. The focus of this project will be twofold: firstly, on SMMEs and entrepreneurship are seen as key drivers for economic growth and development especially more so in emerging economies such as South Africa. The second focus is on government and specifically provincial and local government. Government should create an enabling environment for businesses to be successful and therefore there should be synergy among stakeholders. The readiness of both SMMEs/entrepreneurs and government are vital for accelerated economic growth and specifically regional economic development in both urban and rural regions. On a regional level, local businesses and government need to cooperate and form partnerships for success. This is especially important within the 4IR environment which is an extremely dynamic environment. Readiness in terms of 4IR is therefore important for economic growth and development and in this process, government should attempt to remove barriers and strengthen drivers of 4IR and innovation.

OBJECTIVES/OUTPUTS

The primary objective of the research is to assess the readiness and level of use of 4IR in SMMEs/entrepreneurs and government. In this assessment, aspects such as readiness, barriers and drivers of 4IR will be analysed. It is anticipated that at least three research article equivalents will emanate from this project, using the results of the proposed primary survey. Research articles could include topics on readiness, the perceived barriers for 4IR and also the drivers for 4IR. Also, the results of this survey will be compared with results from partnering teams in Poland, Slovakia and Hungary.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology includes both quantitative and qualitative components. Primary data will be collected via surveys. A draft questionnaire has been developed and will be used in the survey data collection phase. The sample will include SMMEs (total of 300 businesses per region/country) and provincial and local government officials (total of 50 officials per region/country). After the completion of the quantitative survey, the data will be analysed and assessed. The next step will be a qualitative interview process with selected businesses and government officials to confirm results from the quantitative survey. The qualitative interviews will use open-ended questions to determine key themes and will continue until saturation is achieved. Both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews are important in this study. The qualitative interviews will follow the quantitative surveys as a control process to confirm results from the quantitative survey and to identify specific themes for more comprehensive findings and recommendations. The South African phase of this study will lead to specific policy formulation for use by government and the international phase of the study will lead to comparative data which could also lead to future policy development on a local level.

The project can be divided into the following phases:

- Phase 1: Completion of surveys on a local level in the Gauteng region (South Africa) with a focus on SMMEs and provincial and local government (part of this funding application) (urban region).
- Phase 2: Completion of surveys on a local level in the Gert Sibande District in the Mpumalanga region (South Africa) with a focus on SMMEs and provincial and local government (rural region).
- Phase 3: Completion of surveys on international level in Poland, Slovakia and Hungary with a focus on SMMEs and government.
- Phase 4: Qualitative interviews with selected SMMEs and Government officials in all the selected study areas.
- Phase 5: Comparative analysis of the South African findings with that of Poland, Slovakia and Hungary.
- Phase 6: Comparative analysis of the Gauteng findings with that of Gert Sibande District results.

INTERNATIONALISATION

The project will include not only local level data but also international comparative data. In addition, the project team will include two UJ visiting professors from Poland and Hungary and one additional team member from Slovakia. The project aims to compare local urban and rural regions regarding 4IR readiness, but it is also important to compare results on an international basis. This comparison will strengthen our international collaboration.

and will allow for increased international interest in the research. Some of the potential publications will also be published in international journals and thus attract an international audience and future citations.

BENEFIT/CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The project has various benefits. Firstly, the topic is trending and studies focusing on 4IR in business is currently very relevant. In addition, to include the readiness, barriers and drivers of 4IR in government has not been addressed in detail to date. Furthermore, the study will not only focus on South African but will include comparative analysis on local and on international level. The project team is made up of local and international researchers and publications are planned to be published in international journals. In addition to the listed benefits as mentioned above, the research project will also allow for:

- Multi-disciplinary research;
- Collaboration between research units and CBE schools/departments;
- International network extension and collaboration;
- Community engagement via surveys at Gauteng and Mpumalanga provincial government as well as local governments within the two provinces;
- Collaboration with industry (local businesses and government);
- Post-graduate students will benefit by working with experienced researchers;
- The project will lead to a range of local and international comparisons on SMME and government;
- The project will lead to possible policy formulation for improved government services.

RESEARCH TEAM

The research project team consists of the following people:

- Project leader: **Prof DF Meyer** (SPMGPP, CBE, UJ): Overall project leader and will facilitate the project to ensure all objectives are met. He will also be the liaison person with provincial and local government.
- Assistant project leader: **Prof N Meyer** (DHET-NRF SARCHI Entrepreneurship Education, Department of Business Management, CBE, UJ): Ensure the quantitative and qualitative surveys are conducted according to regulations and management of international collaboration. Ensure all ethical approval guidelines are adhered to.
- Prof **Cecile Nieuwenhuizen** (DHET-NRF SARCHI Chair Entrepreneurship Education, CBE, UJ): Research support and linkage to SMMEs and entrepreneurship.
- Prof **Dominique Uwizeyimana** (SPMGPP, CBE, UJ): Research support and linkage to government structures and policy formulation.
- Prof **Włodzimierz Sroka** (WSB University, Poland and DHET-NRF SARCHI Entrepreneurship Education, CBE, UJ): Project leader in Poland.
- Prof **Beata Slusarczyk** (Częstochowa University of Technology, Poland and DHET-NRF SARCHI Entrepreneurship Education, CBE, UJ): Co-project leader in Poland.
- Prof **Domicián Máté** (University of Debrecen, Hungary and Department of Business Management, CBE, UJ): Project leader in Hungary.
- Prof **Ádám Novotny** (Eszterházy Károly University, Eger, Hungary and DHET-NRF SARCHI Entrepreneurship Education, CBE, UJ): Project leader in Hungary.

- Prof. Ing. Dr. **Róbert Štefko**, Ph.D. (University of Presov, Slovakia): Project leader in Slovakia.
- Assoc. prof. Mgr. **Richard Fedorko**, PhD., Assoc. prof. PhDr. **Radovan Bačík**, PhD. , MBA, LL.M. and Mgr. **Eva Benková**, PhD. (University of Presov, Slovakia): Project co-leaders in Slovakia.
- Post-graduate students from School of Public Management and School of Management: Selected students will be involved in data collection and analysis.

Congratulation on joining the project team.

Kind regards



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