

Embracing Innovation in Higher Education Institutions in Sub- Saharan Africa

Challenges and Enablers

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Presentation overview

1

Highlight the disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical needs in Sub-Saharan African higher education.

2

Emphasise the need for innovation to bridge this gap.

3

Discuss the challenges faced by HEIs in fostering innovation.

4

Explore key enablers of innovation, including the EPIC-Tech framework.

5

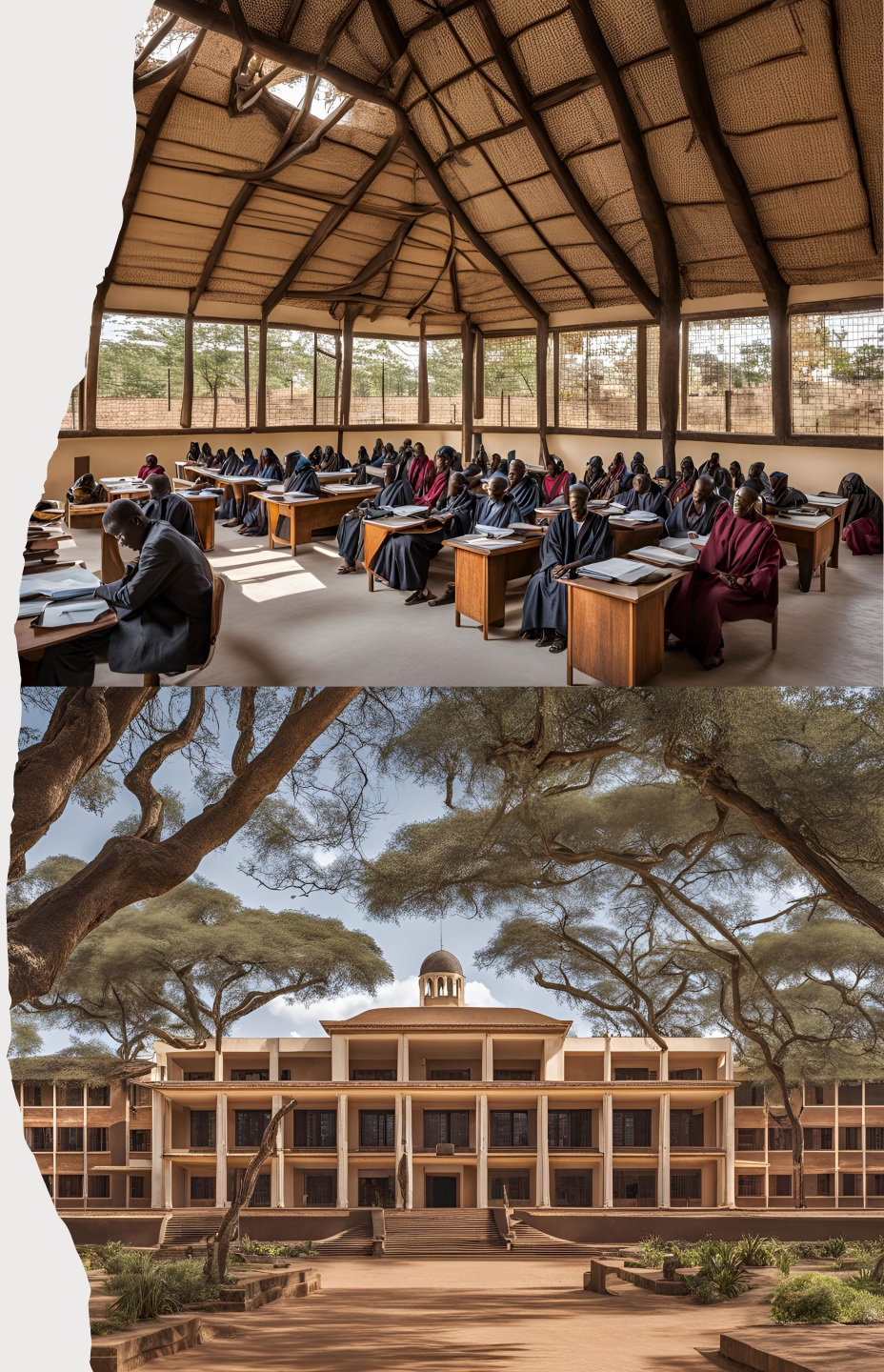
Conclude by emphasising the importance of innovation in driving societal development and economic growth.

Meet Sisipho



The disconnect between theory and practice in Sub-Saharan higher education

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, higher education institutions, while crucial for development, often struggle to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical needs of their societies.



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The Historical Context of Innovation in HEIs

“Contemporary African universities are the result of a complex mix of past experiences and influences, from their European colonial origins and their continued dependence on the ideas and practices in higher education in Europe and North America in the post-independence era, to the ravaging effects of economic recession, structural adjustment programmes, war, social upheaval” (Ng’ethe *et al.*, 2002)

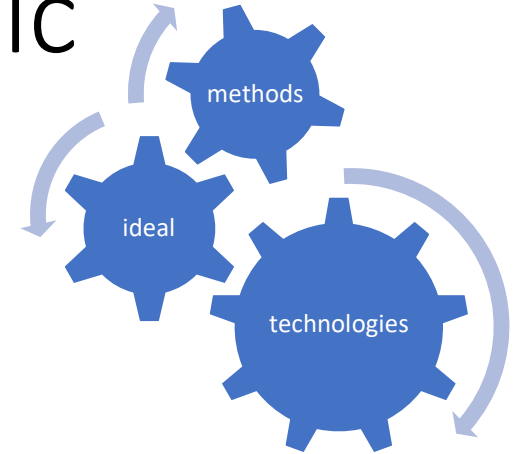


Characteristics of the colonial legacy in African universities

- Separation and alienation from the rural majority, particularly in the Anglophone countries, reflecting the ivory tower nature of the colonial institutions
- An overemphasis on the arts and humanities, with little attention given to the sciences, technology, economics and other professional subjects
- Research that was not related to the needs of the majority
- Limited access to higher education since the universities were geared towards serving elite; although in Francophone countries, university access was offered “to all students who successfully complete the secondary school baccalaureate examination.



Innovation as a Buzz Word or a Holistic Advancement: A Broader Perspective



Defining innovation

Introduction of new ideas, methods, or technologies that enhance the quality and relevance of education (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2018)

Focus on incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices

Aims to foster creativity and research capacity



The Broader Perspective on Innovation

Embracing grassroots knowledge for meaningful solutions

Locally driven innovation is crucial for advancing research and creativity

Holistic advancement in higher education

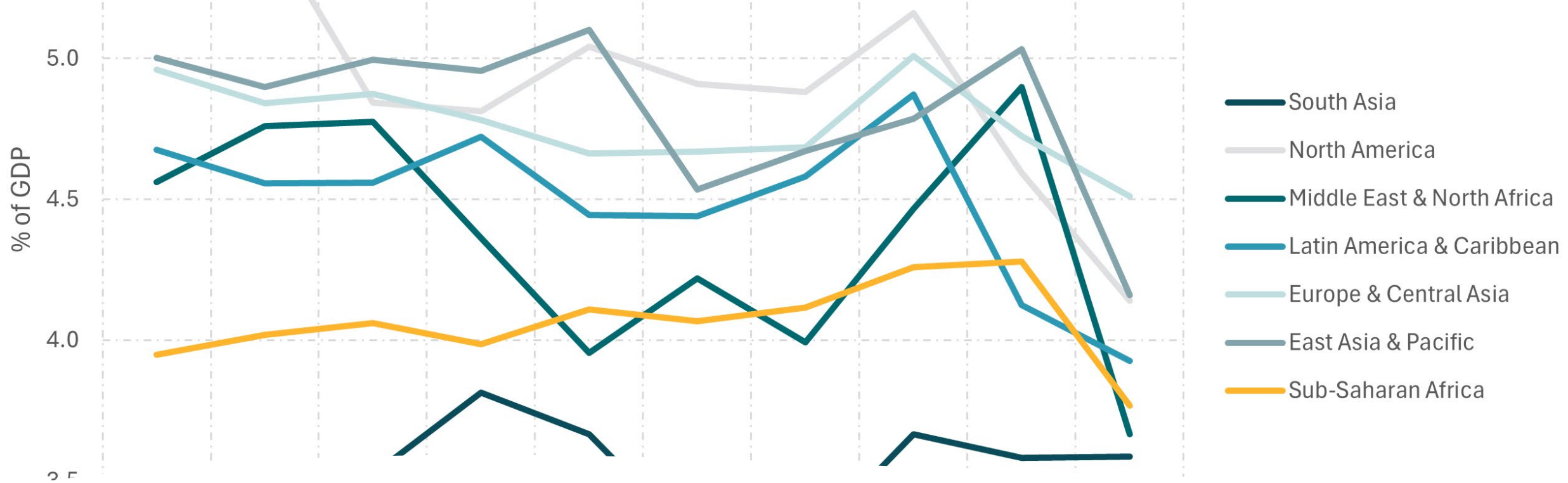


Technology's Role

A potential catalyst, but not the sole focus

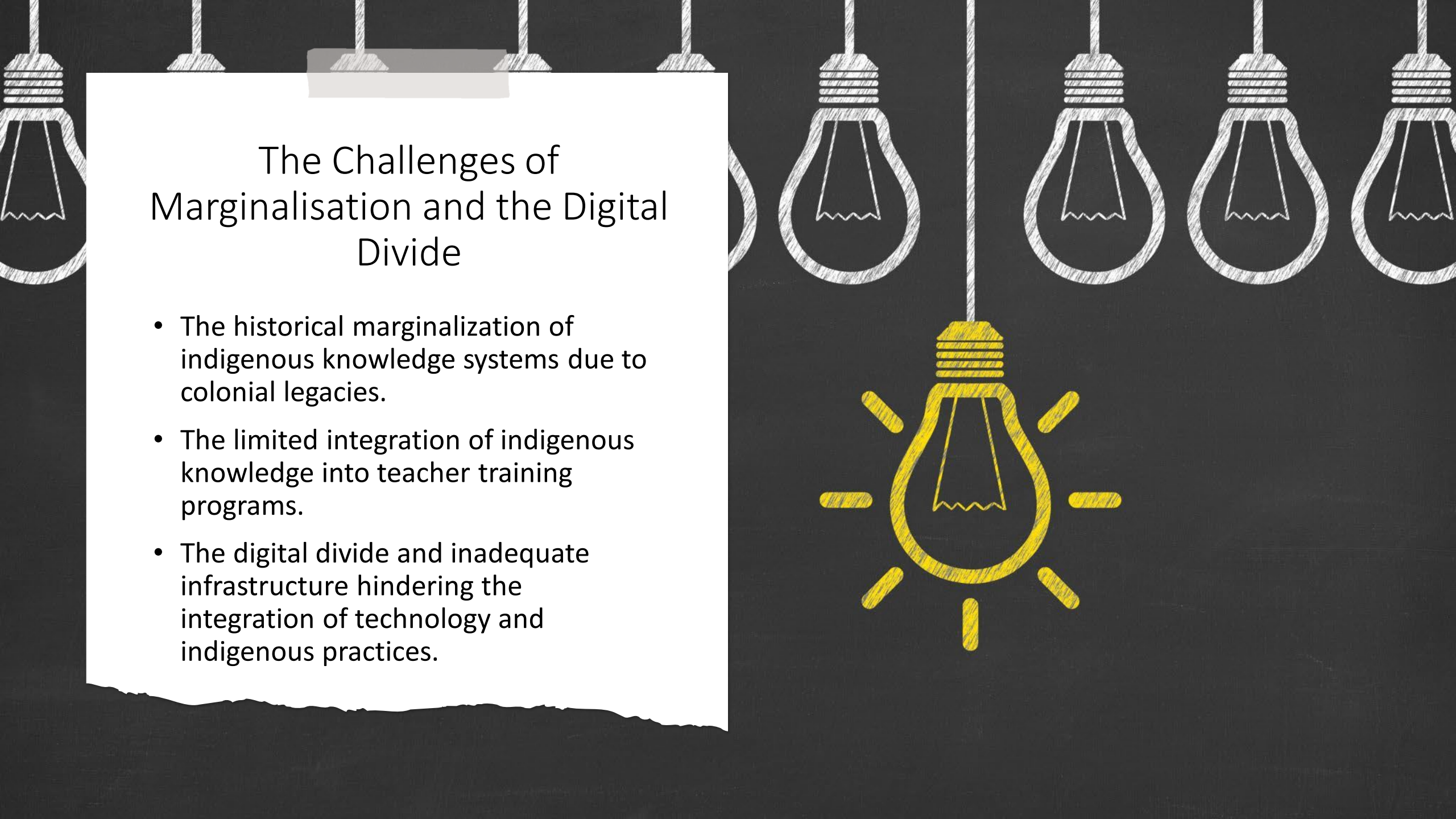
Integration with Indigenous knowledge is crucial

Avoiding the pitfall of technology becoming an obstacle



Declining Investment in Higher Education and its Impact on Research and Innovation

- “there has been declining investment in HE in most African countries. This is reflected by the fact that most HEIs in Africa with the exception of Egypt and South Africa have tended to lag behind in cutting-edge scientific research, technology and innovation. Indeed, African nations continue to be major knowledge consumers and seekers as opposed to knowledge creators/producers. In fact, the continent’s research output is extremely low accounting for 1.01% of the global research output” (Mugimu, 2021)



The Challenges of Marginalisation and the Digital Divide

- The historical marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems due to colonial legacies.
- The limited integration of indigenous knowledge into teacher training programs.
- The digital divide and inadequate infrastructure hindering the integration of technology and indigenous practices.

The influence of the digital divide on emergency remote student-centred learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: a case study of journalism education

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The influence of the digital divide on emergency remote student-centred learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: a case study of journalism education

The Impact of the Digital Divide on Student Participation

“lack of access to reliable electricity and the internet limited participation” (Nkoala & Matsilele, 2023)

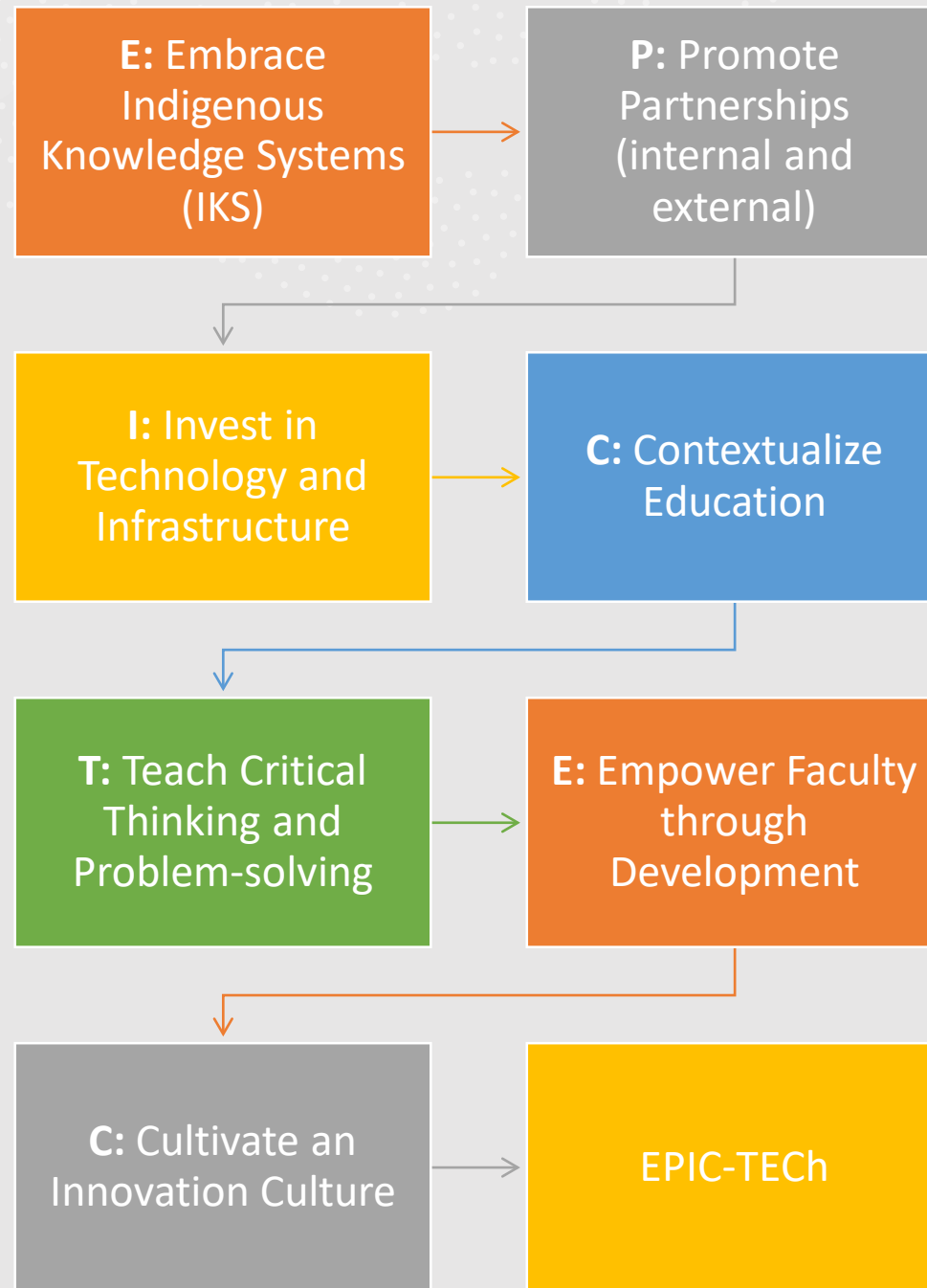
“Someone who possesses high-quality examples of all available technical resources will benefit more than someone who has only one inferior device, a slow connection and a basic Internet subscription.” (Van Dijk, 2020)

Some case studies

- Ashesi University
- The university integrates technology into its curriculum, emphasizing problem-solving skills and practical application
- Carnegie Mellon University Africa
- CMU-Africa emphasizes experiential learning, industry partnerships, and research. Students work on real-world projects, collaborate with local companies, and address regional challenges.
- University of Botswana
- University of Botswana uses innovative e-learning methodologies such as blended learning, and gamification to enhance student engagement and performance.



EPIC-Tech: A Framework for Innovation in Sub-Saharan African Higher Education



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EPIC-Tech: A Framework for Innovation in Sub-Saharan African Higher Education

E: Embrace Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

P: Promote Partnerships (internal and external)

I: Invest in Technology and Infrastructure

C: Contextualize Education

T: Teach Critical Thinking and Problem-solving

E: Empower Faculty through Development

C: Cultivate an Innovation Culture

EPIC-TECh