



From Quality Research to Impact – The Innovation Challenge

Holger Meinke

ISDC Chair

Adjunct Research Professor for Global Food
Sustainability, University of Tasmania, Australia

*ISDC-hosted side event @ FAO Science and Innovation Forum
QoR4D to Strengthen Institutional Innovation
October 13, 2022*



Effectiveness (the fourth element of QoR4D) implies lasting impact.

- So far we have demonstrated how the QoR4D framework can be used to strengthen research quality of an institution.
- It is equally suitable as a foundation for good leadership and improved governance, which improves the effectiveness of an organisation.
- It requires a different approach to performance management standards with a focus on trust and empowerment.



What style of leadership is best suited to address systems challenges?

“Agricultural productivity promotes food system inefficiency”

“... a focus on increasing agricultural yields and efficiency decreases the efficiency of the food system through incentivizing externalization of costs. Instead focus on the efficiency of the food system to deliver profits, healthy diets and a healthy planet.

Reframing the productivity argument towards the efficiency of the food system provides a clear route to reducing market failure, improving public health and sustainability.”

Benton and Bailey (2019)



Reframing the productivity argument towards the efficiency of the food system provides a clear route to reducing market failure, improving public health and sustainability

The questions that arise are:

Is the leadership style and culture of our R4D organisation fit-for-purpose?

Can these organisations effectively address this challenge and reframe the research questions that demand answers?

Scientists need to acknowledge that their disciplinary contributions to problem solving will at best be partial.

Often excellent component research, when implemented without appropriate consideration for the broader systems outcomes, will actually degrade the overall performance of the system.





“Politicians will have to accept that fuzzy answers may be the best expression of expertise; scientists will have to learn that the identification of the fuzzy borderline between knowledge and ignorance may be the sign of real competence.”

Walker and Marchau, 2003.



Rethinking complex, interconnected systems is not enough – we need to change how we govern them.

If scientists want systems to perform better, they need to be comfortable with making a partial contribution. No discipline can solve these problems alone.

If institutional leaders and funders want improved systems performance, they need to incentivise a culture of collaboration by providing staff with a framework that enables “goal-guided autonomy”.

Organisational leaders must implement risk management approaches based on a complexity reading of situations rather than an analytical reading of isolated problems.

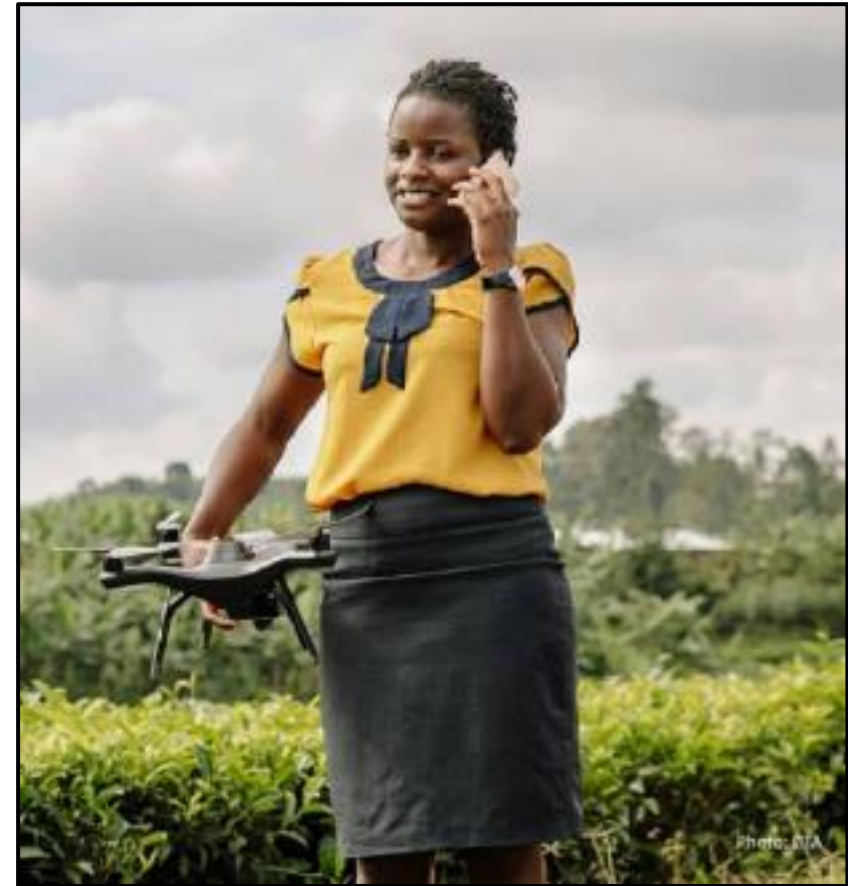
This requires staff with high-level technical as well as organisational competencies.

While most organisations focus on the development of technical competencies, organisational competencies are often overlooked.



Good governance and leadership is something we are all responsible for.

- We all play a role in living the values we espouse.
- We set the standards; we determine the culture.
- We need to adhere to core values such as respect, trust, and humility.
- We are all leaders, and it starts with self-leadership.





Managing the Inputs or Governing the Outcomes?

- Being overly prescriptive when designing a transformative systems agenda is a recipe for failure and antithetical to transformation.
- **An alternative starting position to managing the inputs is to govern the outcomes.**
- Taking adaptive management seriously and embedding it deep into the culture of an organisation will be essential.

Adaptive management starts with reducing the “trust deficit”.

- Once organisational competencies exist, people need to exercise their new skills.
- This might challenge existing power dynamics – exercising organisational competencies requires a degree of autonomy.
- Empowering staff in making decisions that are commensurate with their competencies means letting go of a “command and control” model of organisational management.
- Organisations might find this difficult given the “trust deficit” created by the old “command and control” model.



Adaptive management starts with reducing the “trust deficit”.

- Build a risk management framework that provides goal-guided autonomy throughout the organisation.
- This fosters much needed organisational resilience where individuals adapt themselves by acting in accordance with organisational goals and values (context for adaptation).
- Adaptive management will then consist of proactive measures reflecting situational awareness rather than reactive adjustments.
- It does require understanding of and commitment to the organisation’s strategy by all.

Multirational Management

“The principles of multirational management and governance recognize that different sectors of our societies view the world very differently and use very different language and tools to articulate their perspectives.

Clearly articulated respect for these different world views is necessary if the intent is to engage these groups via a vibrant, new strategy.”

ISDC, 2020

<https://cas.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/images/Publications/ISDC%20Research%20and%20Innovation%20Strategy%20Feedback%2030%20Oct.pdf>

Final reflections

1. Technical innovations on their own can unintentionally degrade systems performance.
2. However, they can also act as entry points to catalyse system changes via a social learning process.
3. We must shift our preference for traditional, technical perspectives towards a knowledge sharing approach that facilitates goal-guided autonomy.

Warning: Hic sunt dracones!



Final reflections

4. Institutions need to provide the enabling environment that encourages scientists to **achieve** their potential and **transgresses** unhelpful technical & organisational boundaries.
5. The four elements of the QoR4D framework provide the foundations on which such an enabling environment can be build.

Warning: Hic sunt dracones!



Call to action

Funders, organisational leaders, and research managers

- Use a broad, comprehensive QoR4D framework throughout the organisation.
- Shift the focus from (micro)-managing inputs to governing outcomes
- Promote goal-guided autonomy for all staff.
- Empower people and align the organisational aspirations with actions – walk the walk.

Scientists

- Embrace an inclusive innovation approach to ensure impact of research.
- Acknowledging science's partial contribution is a sign of real competency.

Everyone

- Consider how disciplinary humility can improve collaboration.
- Design and manage knowledge by recognizing that different communities have different entry points, needs and rationalities.



Thank you



[www.linkedin.com/company/
cgiar-advisory-services](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cgiar-advisory-services)



[@CAS_CGIAR](https://twitter.com/CAS_CGIAR)



www.cas.cgiar.org/



[CGIAR Advisory Services](#)