

Rwanda is turning to the private sector to strengthen research and innovation in universities and colleges, officials said Wednesday.

Education leaders identified funding shortages, a limited number of researchers, and gaps in expertise as major barriers preventing higher education institutions from addressing societal and economic challenges.

Dr. Edward Kadozi, Director General of the Higher Education Council (HEC), told a national meeting that partnerships with businesses could provide critical support for research projects and innovations.

"They say funds are not available to promote research and innovation," Kadozi said. "We are exploring ways to collaborate with the private sector so they can support research and help scale up innovative projects. Another challenge is researcher capacity. Universities have few researchers, especially at the doctoral level, to lead studies. We are looking at how to strengthen them. We also want to ensure university innovations reach industries, the private sector, and beyond."

The meeting, held in Kigali, brought together university leaders, lecturers, researchers, government officials, and international partners to discuss strategies for enhancing research and innovation while improving the quality of higher education.

Participants also explored ways to better prepare students for the modern labor market and align academic programs with current technological and societal needs.

Officials said stronger public-private partnerships would not only boost university research but also generate practical solutions to Rwanda's economic and social challenges. By leveraging private sector resources, universities aim to transform research outputs into innovations that benefit industry and society.