

The perceptions of research values and priorities in water resource management from the 3rd Orange River Basin Symposium

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Abstract

Research has played an important role in water resource management and a consensus on research objectives would increase the efficiency of these practices. In this paper we aimed to elicit the views of attendees of the 3rd Orange River Basin Symposium regarding water-related research, by using both quantitative and qualitative responses to a questionnaire survey, and purposeful sampling methods. Overall, research was perceived to play an important role in water resource management and there was significant agreement on which sectors are responsible for carrying out this research. Although clear strengths in water resource management in southern Africa were identified, we found that most perceived weaknesses related to the lack of enforcement or to human resource constraints. Despite this fact, the identified research priorities, which were aligned to those of the Water Research Commission, tended to be technical in nature and would not address these perceived weaknesses. Our recommendations were that, by incorporating previously ignored sectors into research, such as private consultants and non-governmental organisations, and addressing human capacity and enforcement issues, unique and unexplored research opportunities could improve water resource management.

Keywords: Governance, interdisciplinary research, stakeholders, strategic planning, policy implementation