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In South Africa, dominant discourses on research development are characterised by a technical-rational approach combined with a focus on the individual. Working from the notion that research is best characterised by the notion of communities of practice, it is claimed that more attention must be given to the building of intellectually engaging communities. Well-supported research communities are what ensure strong contributions dealing with the questions of the day, increased outputs on a continual basis, and long term research sustainability. Though a focus on outputs and provision of incentives are both relevant elements of research management and development, it is argued that they must not take place at the expense of supporting communities of practice in research.
This article discusses a number of critical areas of research development that have been identified: addressing perceptions and myths about research; management and support; mentoring; engagement with postgraduate programmes; incentives; resources; and creating research initiatives. For each of these critical areas, the intended and unintended consequences of current developments in research and research management on research practices and outputs

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