

Richard Ganter

South Africa Wind Energy Barriers

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Abstract

Globally, out of the renewable energy mix wind energy has shown rapid growth due to a range of policies designed to promote renewable energy including equipment subsidies, rebates, net metering laws, investment tax credits and in Europe the electricity feed in laws (Beck & Martinot 2004). However, in South Africa the energy market is distorted and barriers for new technologies such as wind remain (Holm et al 2008). Whilst there are multiple opportunities to maximise this renewable resource as seen globally, the low deployment of wind energy in South Africa, in a grid and non grid environment highlights a lack of implementation which is likely policy related. Policy related instruments at the disposal of the South African government as seen in the global context above require further investigation.

Various countries in the EU have implemented policies to remove barriers for wind energy, broadly identified as administrative, fiscal and grid access.

This study examines the current renewable energy policies in South Africa and asks what the barriers to entry for wind energy are and how these might be removed to commercialize this technology.

Using qualitative research methods, six key stakeholders with an in-depth knowledge of the South African RE sector were identified. These stakeholders were interviewed with a pre defined questionnaire which focused on the current state of the RE and wind sector and their perceptions of current barriers to entry and which mechanisms could address the removal of barriers. The findings show the lack of implementation relating mainly to policy, regulatory, legal and administrative issues. Whilst support schemes such as the feed in tariff were welcomed as key tools for the deployment of renewable energy technology.

It was further found that the liberalization of the energy sector requires more rapid implementation, priority access to the grid, the quasi monopoly status of the utility Eskom perceived as a constraint. In addition, it is not technology nor to a lesser extend financial that hinders uptake of wind energy but largely, the skills and know how gap.

An overriding factor raised in relation to policy is the perception by some stakeholders that a renewable energy act as seen in other countries could provide the overall policy instrument for successful deployment of wind energy.

Key words: South Africa, Wind energy barriers, support schemes, renewable energy, built environment

Dedication

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