

Triple Helix International Conference 2013 in London: Bringing businesses, universities and governments together to co-innovate and solve economic, social and technological challenges

The Kenyan Triple Helix – Driving the economic transformation of the nation.

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Abstract

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Kenya is on the cusp of a transformation. Wealth creation used to be confined to the processing of raw materials and the exploitation of tourism assets. Today wealth is increasingly driven by knowledge, technology and innovation. The value of country's annual exports of technology related services increased twenty fold over a decade to reach some US\$360 million in 2010. The Kenyan mobile banking service, *M-Pesa*, is more advanced than that currently available in the UK. In March last year IBM announced that Nairobi will be the location of one of its select innovation centres. Sustaining the economic transformation of Kenya will depend on stable politics, but more specifically on an effective national innovation system. The Triple Helix lies at the heart of the innovation system. This paper describes the nature of Kenya's Triple Helix, how it has been formed and how it currently functions.

The presenters are just completing work in Kenya for the Gatsby Foundation on a feasibility study for a new organisation - Msingi, meaning Foundation in Swahili - to support innovation, technology transfer and economic transformation at firm, sector and innovation system scales. The new organisation will invest in existing and new firms in targeted sectors with comparative advantage, facilitate the inward transfer of technologies relevant to the firm and sector, and support their successful application through technical assistance.

Key to the success of Msingi is the effective function of the Triple Helix. Consequently, the presenters have engaged with relevant organisations in government, research and technology institutions, and the business community – including the financial sector - to identify gaps and constraints in the existing innovation system which can be addressed by Msingi, and thereby facilitate firm and sector level growth.

This is a crucial time for Kenya, following the presidential election in March and the introduction of a new constitution. The new government will face the challenge of implementing the widely agreed 'Vision 2030' development strategy, which is designed to support development of a knowledge based economy and society.

The paper will explore the ways in which members of the Kenyan Triple Helix are helping to implement Vision 2030 by building the innovation system of the country. It discusses the challenges that they are currently facing and the role that Msingi can play in addressing those challenges.