Triennale on Education and Training in Africa
(Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, February 12-17, 2012)

Promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for sustainable development in Africa: How to design and implement an effective response through education and training systems

Sub-theme 3
Lifelong acquisition of scientific and technological knowledge and skills for Africa's sustainable development in a globalized world

Impact of Recent Reforms in Science and Technology in Kenya: the case of Public Research Funding

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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

1. Public funding for R&D can both engender and stimulate the training needed to support the lifelong learning crucial for this social transformation. In this study, we start with a general evaluation of the reforms that have taken place in the ST&I sector in Kenya since 2003. We then focus on reforms and impacts of Public Research Funding (PRF) on R&D, looking at the impact of the recent reforms in PRF through the following three questions: (i) what is the status quo of the research funding landscape in Kenya; (ii) what is the impact of projects funded by public research funds; and, (iii) does public funding increase the total spending on research or merely displaces funding from other sources? First, an analysis of a 2009 study done under the auspices of the African Science Technology and Innovation Indicators (ASTII) in Kenya revealed three key findings: females are underrepresented in the ST&I sector in Kenya; Government agencies spend the highest share of their funds on research through funding other institutions; and most institutions do not allocate their own funds for research. Second, looking at Kenya Government's funding on research (Public Research Funding-PRF), 75% of the projects funded under the current PRF scheme performed well or fairly, indicating that the immediate outputs (e.g., published collaborative papers and patents registered) are often realized. In contrast, most of the projects that missed out on PRF were never undertaken (85%) while 9% obtained alternative funding and 6% were downscaled to student thesis projects. In sum, these data highlight the crucial role of Government funding in promoting critical local research that would otherwise stand little chance of being executed. Overall, we provide a snapshot of the status and shape of the research arena in Kenya, and hope that this will help in guiding the government on how it could spend its research money.