

Nurturing indigenous capacities for culture-centric innovations: a cross-sectional study

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An online cross-sectional study was conducted in 2014 and 2015 with a view to informing an effective pedagogy for enhancing Kenya's innovation capacity. Kenya, like other developing countries, recognises science, technology and innovation as the fundamental building block for leapfrog developments in the midst of knowledge-driven economic globalisation. Eight key skills were assessed and weighted by independent key informants drawn from all over the world. The study revealed a paradox of misplaced emphasis, where the skills considered most important for innovation consistently received the least emphasis at the basic education level. Systems thinking skills, scientific inquiry and talent management were the worst casualties. Cultural settings were largely neglected in traditional pedagogy, though they do provide unique comparative advantages for building the indigenous competencies required to address locally idiosyncratic problems innovatively and achieve sustainable homegrown solutions. This outcome was not unique to Kenya, but dominant across African countries, where education systems mostly reflect the standards, approaches and mindsets borrowed with minimal adjustments from the former colonial masters. The challenge of ensuring originality and domesticating best practices, therefore, deserves increased attention in education and training. To elevate the study findings beyond academic interests into actionable policy targets, this presentation will engage the audience in synthesising the results and deriving key messages for the 21st-century educators and state decisions makers.