

Training Professionals for Infrastructure Development: The Troika of Government, Industry and Academia

Abstract:

The Kenya Vision 2030 is the country's development blue print covering the period 2008 to 2030 which aims at making Kenya a newly industrializing middle income country, providing high quality life for all its citizens by the year 2030. When considering how to attain Kenya Vision 2030, we are concerned that all our children should have access to primary and secondary education, healthy food, potable water, healthcare and housing. We are concerned about a healthy nation where all Kenyans can have access to health services at affordable costs and we aim at reducing extreme poverty levels by more than half by the year 2030. Kenya is characterized by sometimes alarming socio-economic indicators such as: About half of the population live below the poverty line of one US\$ per day Access to potable water is about 49% for rural areas and about 68% for urban population. Less than 10% of the candidates who sit for secondary examination gain admission to universities. Only about 10% of the population have access to electricity A large proportion of population especially in urban areas, live in slums without safe housing. The poor-rich gap is widening Environmental degradation continues to be a problem due to rapid population growth rate Poor infrastructure has made Kenyan goods expensive in the international market. When talking about socio-economic growth in Kenya one notes that the agriculture sector has been the largest contributor to GDP accounting for just under 25% while the manufacturing sector accounts for slightly over 13% of GDP. In the agriculture sector we are interested in the application of appropriate technologies to enhance production and we are further concerned about post harvest technologies and marketing of the produce. In the manufacturing sector we need to develop and re-engineer our industries by introducing modern and efficient technologies. The manufacturing sector's performance has been adversely affected by the inefficient infrastructure in the form of poor roads, inefficient railway, inadequate and expensive power/energy, and inefficient communication systems. This means that if we are able to make our infrastructure reasonably efficient, our manufactured goods would be competitive in the international market and thereby attract more local and foreign investors leading to creation of employment opportunities for many more Kenyans with accompanying enhancement of the standard of living of Kenyans. We indeed witnessed, a decade ago many industries that closed and others which relocated to other countries when we faced severe drought which led to power rationing. It is evident that education and training of professionals for infrastructure development would play a major role in the process of transforming the Kenyan economy. The major actors in delivering education and training for infrastructure include the government, the universities (and polytechnics) and the industry generally and hence the troika. When addressing the challenges of raising the standard of living of the Kenyan society we must recognize the need to consider the indicators which reflect the basic necessities of life namely food, shelter, clothing in addition to society's access to such services like education, health, security and general welfare. It is additionally important to consider the availability of infrastructure including water supply, sewer and environmental sanitation systems, transport systems, communication systems, energy and power systems. We must also recognize the need to empower Kenyans so that they can compete in the knowledge economy of the future by equipping them with capacity to manage the latest technology including ICT.