

Commercialization of Research Outputs in Kenyan Universities

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Abstract : In this emerging era of knowledge economy, universities, as major centres of learning and research, are becoming increasingly important as sources of ideas, knowledge, skills, innovation and technological advances. These ideas can be turned into new products, processes and systems needed to drive their respective national economies, and thus placing universities at the centre of the national innovation systems. Thus, commercialization of research outputs from universities to industry has become an area of strong policy interest in African countries. To assess the level of commercialization of research outputs in Kenyan universities, a standardized questionnaire covering seven sub-sections, namely: University Commercialization Environment, Management of Commercialization Activities, Commercialization Office, Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), Early Stage Financing and Venture Capital; Industrial Linkages; and Technology Parks and Incubators was administered among a few selected public and private universities. Results show that all the universities have a strategic plan; though not all have innovation and commercialization as part of it. Half the nineteen surveyed universities indicated they have created designated offices for fostering commercialization. Majority have guidelines on IPRs which advocate IP to be co-owned by researcher/university. University-industry linkages are weak. Most universities are taking precursory steps to incentivise and encourage entrepreneurial activities among their academic staff and students, even though the level of resources devoted to them is low. It is recommended that building capacity in entrepreneurship among staff and students and committing more resources to R&D activities hold potential to increased commercialization of university research outputs.

Keywords : commercialization, knowledge, R&D, university

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