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Innovation for Service Delivery Excellence

Notes from Editors

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Innovation is related to what Joseph Schumpeter defined as creative destruction. The sources for innovative activity are varied making innovative outcomes to come from diverse sources. Innovation can be seen to be interconnected to a variety of fields such as technology, engineering, management and services. It can extend also to include philosophy, sociology, economics, the sciences both natural and human and social science if we assume new and innovative outcomes also are part of all these disciplines. The preference has always been to link innovation to economics mainly because it is seen as a critical factor in the economic development and transformation processes. Despite the recognition that innovation is defined by the creation of new processes and products, the distinguishing mark has been how these processes and products reach a market and user from whoever is the producer. There is however a need to re-link innovation not only to economics but also to a variety of other fields particularly engineering, management and services. Innovation is linked to new ways of thinking, new ways of doing, new institutions, new production systems, new organisations, new management approaches and practices, new engineering designs in addition to new methods of marketing and businesses and practices.

The sources for all processes and products that can pass and be designated as innovation are all fields of human, social, natural and applied sciences, technology and engineering. Processes and products are created, but to be defined as innovation their relevance to users and markets has been recognised as priority; i.e., their economic relevance has been preferred as the distinguishing defining attribute. We need to rethink the claim that what is

produced as product and process can be said to turn into innovation when it passes from the producers to reach the users, the market and the relevant identifiable economic actors. We think the very creation of new processes and products to define innovation is a necessary condition, the realisation of economic value can be sufficient, but without the necessary ingredients, the sufficient condition will not materialise. At the necessary level all sources are included for innovative creativity and at the sufficient level, the commercial recognition is relevant. But the recognition through economic market does not invalidate or take over the whole innovation cycle as mainly being in the economic domain.

There is room to open innovation for service delivery excellence and not just commercial excellence. Innovation is broader and should include both economic and non-economic uses and applications. In fact the non-economic like service delivery can be promoted by Ubuntu and values that are associational and not individualistic, self-interested, instrumental, apartness and unsocial. As Nelson Mandela put it " ...humanness does not weaken business. It strengthens it... It cements the relationship upon which the teamwork and innovation must rest... Both teamwork and trust are seen as vital components of world-class entrepreneurs today. They embody the positive values of the so-called "triple bottom line" of business sustainability." (Ajstid, Vol 1, no.2 &3, Page 259). So economics as it is driven by the current dominant capitalist logic suffers from a value deficiency. Innovation has to be liberated from being trapped by the domination of individualistic economics. What is new as innovation can have valuations that do not necessarily become tested through all commerce alone. It can still be innovation if it remains not only commercially but also socially and economically useful.

We can define different types of innovation arising from different disciplines. For example the innovation related to engineering and management can generate services by the various actors that are involved in both designing engineering new products and managing the overall processes. Innovation for service delivery can be different from engineering or technological innovation as all can be different from that dominated by economics. Innovation for service delivery can generate new service development and service designs, processes and products.

Effective service delivery requires the capacity to create new approaches of engineering to produce tangible and recognisable service processes. Excellence in service delivery systems requires the synergy of human, technological, organisational capabilities on the input side before the products reach the market. Technological and non-technological, economic and non-economic factors influence the innovation that generates process and products that turn out to become services and service delivery.

The papers in this issue of Ee-JRIF raise the significance of Innovation for excellent service delivery.

The papers and the book review together raise the important issues though in different ways and on different problems how to apply innovation to bring about service delivery excellence.

The paper on Contributions of Tendaho Irrigation Project to the Improvement of Livelihoods of Agro pastoralists in the Lower Awash Basin, Northeastern Ethiopia by Desale Kidane Amanuel Mekonnen and Demel Teketay Address how a specific irrigation project contributes to the improvement of rural livelihood. The paper on Indigenous Knowledge Management Framework for Coffee Production in Ethiopia by Tewodros Genanaw and Workshet Lameneu discuss indigenous knowledge within the agricultural economy. The paper on Scenario Planning as a Management Tool for Sustainable Aquaculture by Worku Jimma, Daniel Adjei-Boateng, and Nicolas Van Vosselen explores how aquaculture can provide protein at reasonable cost to a growing world population. The paper on The Practice of Opting for Open Source Solutions in Higher Education Institutions of Ethiopia by Florida Alemayehu. And Lemma Lessa discusses the way ICT revolution is transforming the Ethiopian education landscape. The paper on the role of Innovation in Development could lessons be drawn for Ethiopia by Bedru. B. Balana brings out innovative creations from unusual sources such as the case of the Ethiopian shoemaker Bethlehem illustrating the huge untapped potential of innovation for development in Ethiopia. Finally the book review by Daniel Alemu on Unite or Perish: Africa Fifty years after the Founding of the OAU reflects on the contribution of the outputs from the Africa Unity for Renaissance series of conference which started in 2010 (<http://www.sarchi-steid.org.za/index.php/component/k2/item/81-2015-african-unity-for-renaissance-conference-and-africa-day-expo>).

The papers together however different the issues, methods, theories and models employed raise the important problem of how to apply innovation for service delivery excellence.

The EeJRIF editorial team feels honoured and proud once again to congratulate our Editor in Chief Dr. Yeshitella Degefu on the award, the nation's Cross of Merit of The Order of The White Rose, bestowed on him by the Government of Finland for his service and the high impact research and development work he has carried out in modern molecular diagnostics of plant pathogens of potato.

Sources

1. African Journal of Science, Technology and Innovation, Vo.1, no.2 &3, 2009
2. Reuel J. Khoza(ed.); Let Africa Lead: African Transformation Leadership for the 21st Century Business, Vezubuntu Publishing Ltd., 2006