

Contributions to science

When I first heard that the University of Nairobi has a Science Park, the words science and park drew my curiosity.

I imagined that we had opened up a museum of sorts, with science imagined things such as fossils, old pottery, bones, face masks, shells, all arranged in cages, curtained boxes etc. I conjured images of old men, with spectacles, walking around in grey and white lab coats, looking very clever, speaking or rattling speech at decibels that lesser artsy types such as myself could not understand.

So last month, I was introduced to a young innovator, who was kind enough to explain what a science park is. Of course he upset my notions of a science park with his explanation that a science park is a technology park. So

where are the exhibits I asked, no he said, "a science park is actually the bridge between academia and industry; it is a lab where students are hosted by the university, immediately after they graduate". In the park they are allocated space and some resources to enable them to develop marketable products. As they begin to experience what industry is about, they interact with other innovators and may decide to move into manufacturing.

The Universities Science Park and Technology has originated its own Fab. Lab, a set of equipment that allows you to do almost anything. Basically, the Fab labs have rapid prototyping equipment that allows an innovator to develop and pilot test products. The concept which originated from MIT centers, is an interesting concept that was sold to over 10 governments and donors.

A science park is the lab and the market for products. It allows the students the opportunity to become independent. A key characteristic of a science park is that there must be collaboration between academia and the industry. The student becomes the innovator whose

Science Park collaborators with Kamau Gachigi of the University Fab. Labs

