



**eLearning
Africa**

6TH MINISTERIAL ROUND TABLE

“Policy and Innovation in Education in Africa”



MAY 29, 2013

**SAFARI CONFERENCE CENTRE
WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**

COMMUNIQUE

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Communiqué: 6th Ministerial Round Table on “Policy and Innovation in Education in Africa”

This 6th Ministerial Round Table (MRT) on “Policy and Innovation in Education in Africa” was hosted by the Government of Namibia at eLearning Africa in Windhoek, Namibia on 29 May 2013. It was attended by Ministers, Deputy Ministers and ministerial representatives of Basic and Higher Education, ICT, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Post and Telecommunications from Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia.

Participants in the Ministerial Round Table:

- Reviewed both Africa’s experience of ICT in education and the development of policy to date
- Discussed emerging trends in the way Africans are learning and the increasing influence of innovative technologies
- Shared ideas on appropriate policy responses to the influence of rapid technological change on the African learning landscape

The following developments relating to learning innovation and the use of ICT in education were noted:

1. It has become increasingly clear that ICTs are an enabler for transformation, change and innovation in education and, if integrated and used appropriately, can provide cost-effective solutions to problems of access, equity and quality.
2. Education is essential to the development of knowledge societies and knowledge economies. Providing relevant and quality education and training is vitally important, as well as relevant content for teachers to facilitate this.
3. Namibia’s policy development process in the education sector provides a good model for other countries: it is inclusive, involves multiple stakeholders, creates synergies and fosters ownership.
4. Policies that take account of the particular circumstances of specific countries, setting realistic and achievable targets, appear to have been the most successful.
5. The real challenge is not so much in the formulation of a policy but in its proper implementation. Successful governments create an environment in which people are encouraged to innovate. Rwanda was cited as a country that successfully implements its policies and, as a result, makes good progress in its development.



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6. Policy-making needs to be a living process, requiring regular review, in order to remain up-to-date in a fast-changing technological landscape.
7. Policies must promote an innovation culture, as innovation provides a competitive edge. The Kenyan innovation hubs applying ICT-based solutions in health, education, environment, business and finance were used as an illustration of how this can be achieved.
8. The mobile “revolution” provides opportunities for formal learning, as mobile penetration is very high in Africa and it enables multiple activities for continuous learning.
9. 21st century skills are important both to foster communication, creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, efficiency and productivity and to equip young people with the relevant skills required by the modern workplace.

Participants in the MRT took note of the continuing global dialogue about the future of learning and raised a number of issues:

World education is under re-construction to cater for new skills, future jobs, complex challenges and economic and other changes, as current education systems fail to prepare for the demands of the modern work place, not only in developing countries but also in developed ones.

Issues to be considered in this regard are:

1. Consideration must urgently be given to subsidised broadband connectivity (mobile, satellite, etc.) and electricity in all schools, in order to facilitate learning opportunities provided by new technologies.
2. Self-organised, fault-tolerant technology.
3. Self-organised learning environments (SOLE) for those who may not have access to formal learning opportunities.
4. Clouds of mediators (e.g. the ‘Granny Club’) to extend such learning opportunities and provide support to those who make use of SOLE. These mediators provide their support through the Self Organised Mediation Environment (SOME). This can be referred to as a ‘school in the cloud,’ facilitated by mediators using the Internet. (For descriptions or SOLEs, SOMEs and the ‘Granny Club’, please visit <http://solesandsomes.wikispaces.com>)



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5. Curriculum and assessment organised around and based on the big questions which will engage learners.
6. Self-organised assessment systems which provide immediate feedback on progress.
7. Disparities between rural and urban areas with regard to connectivity and power need to be addressed through deliberate policy interventions.

MRT participants acknowledged the following with reference to prioritising affordable, quality bandwidth access in Africa’s rural areas:

1. There is a need to collaborate and negotiate with investors and service providers as an African Union and not as separate states.
2. How to engage the private sector in the provision of services to rural areas remains a challenge but their involvement can make a huge difference to government initiatives. Well-structured Public-Private Partnerships with clear goals can facilitate this. However, private investors need to understand the vision in order to support it.
3. New technologies offer exciting opportunities, particularly in remote areas, and the possibilities offered by mobile technologies need to be explored more in the provision of services to rural and remote communities.
4. It is important that rural communities use appropriate technologies, which means that their involvement and collaboration is important.



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For JP – inspiring knowledge, it was an honor to participate in the 6th Ministerial Round Table of eLearning Africa, sharing our experience and good practices in the implementation of ICT projects all around the world. Africa is a continent of opportunities. Delivering the right innovation policies and investing in a global dialogue on Education, African countries have all the potential to build a strong knowledge society in the 21st century.



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Participants took note of The eLearning Africa Report 2013, which again showed that:

The most popular devices are laptops and mobile phones and that the most popular use of technology is to access online learning resources. This year’s report showed that 16% of respondents are creating content in African languages and that almost half of the respondents had experienced failure in technology use/integration.

In their discussion of the report, some participants argued that:

1. The pace of the transformation and re-construction of education is impeded by an outdated policy architecture. There are huge policy gaps because of the rapid advance in technology and an ever-changing environment. These need to be addressed urgently.
2. 16% of respondents are creating content in African languages.
3. Integrated Government driven ICT in Education policies are required to facilitate Ministries and departments to plan more comprehensively and work cross-sectorally and not in silos.

MRT participants made a number of recommendations or policy-makers and decision-makers to consider in formulating and implementing their ICT in Education policies:

1. Ministry of Finance involvement is crucial in planning and executing ICT in Education programmes.
2. Through the policy process, enable and develop well-structured Public-Private Partnerships to provide affordable and quality ICT services to rural and remote areas.
3. Engage with parents and communities on issues of cyber safety.
4. Conduct regular policy reviews to ensure that policies remain relevant and cater for changing needs and advances in technology.
5. Attract larger numbers of young people to science and technology from an early age to spur innovation and development, especially women.



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