Enhancing Access to Quality Tertiary Education in SSA Through Distance Education and ICTs

EXPERTS CONSULTATIVE MEETING
September 26 & 27, 2003
ODWIRA ROOM
La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra, Ghana.

AGENDA

SEPTEMBER 26

9:00am – 9:15  Introductory Remarks
Purpose of the Meeting & Introduction of the Keynote Speaker

9:15 – 10:15 am  Keynote Presentation
Application and Institutional Integration of Distance Education and ICTs at the University of Dar-Es-Salaam
Professor Mutaghywa, University of Dar-Es-Salaam,

10:15am – 1:15pm:  Session 1. Infrastructure
(Coffee Break 11:15 – 11:30am)

Telecommunication and computing infrastructure are bedrock requirements for effective implementation of educational ICTs. Regulatory and policy barriers are well known and will not always be quick or easy to overcome. The cost of satellite bandwidth, which is the most practicable source of Internet connectivity for Africa, remains high and availability remains low, and according to the UNDP Human Development Report 2001, the entire continent of Africa has less bandwidth than the town of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Unreliable electricity poses another perennial infrastructural challenge in many African countries. Custom tariffs and foreign exchange regulations may also hinder easy acquisition of equipment. Participants will discuss their own experience in addressing these issues and propose possible new and creative ways in which to mitigate identified problems. They will attempt to address such questions as how much bandwidth and how many computers are really needed for effectiveness? What implementation and operational capacity have to be built? How can institutions play a greater role in influencing national policies? The session will review related on-going efforts such as the Bandwidth Initiative, sponsored by the US foundation’s Partnership for Higher Education¹ and innovative options such as mobile Internet units, local computer assembly, educational bandwidth and the feasibility of aggregating institutional demand across countries to achieve economies of scale. Session discussions will include:

- Connectivity and Computing Requirements
- Policy Environment & Issues
- Existing Initiatives & Possible Solutions
- Costs & Business Models

Moderator:  Professor Lakawamba, Rector, Kigali Institute of Technology, Rwanda

¹ The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa is an initiative of Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation (www.foundation-partnership.org)
1:00pm – 2:00pm    Lunch Break
Session 2 – Applications & Mainstreaming

The ubiquity of the Internet coupled with advances in desktop and mobile computing have made an impressive array of educational applications more feasible and accessible. Virtual labs are accessible on CDs or on the Internet. Point and click tools aid pedagogical design of instructional materials. Cell phones, mobile computers and telecenters provide increased opportunities for interactive distance learning. Digital libraries and portals enable instantaneous “anytime anywhere” access to knowledge resources. EMIS systems support student management and enhance operational efficiency. Innovations such as distributed learning are blurring the lines between face-to-face and distance learning and are making dual and mixed-mode a more realistic possibility for traditional institutions. But, which applications are truly feasible and cost-effective in the SSA context? What are the institutional frameworks will be required to make them work. How will stakeholders accept innovations? How can the investment costs be justified? What are the cost-benefit analyses? Which applications should take priority? The session will examine the interplay of issues that arise in selecting among many possible and exciting options that can enhance access and quality and the requirements for mainstreaming them within the learning community in the SSA context. Session discussions will include:

2:00pm – 2:15pm  Video Presentation - Professor Dick Larson  
Director, Center for Pedagogical Innovations, MIT, USA

2:15pm -4:00pm  Session Discussions

• Quality Enhancing Applications
  - Curriculum and Content Development
  - Science, Mathematics and Language Education
  - In-Service Teacher Training
  - Research, Digital Libraries and Portals
  - EMIS systems

• Innovative Learning Frameworks and Applications
  - Distance Education
  - Mixed mode and Distributed Learning,
  - Virtual universities
  - Telemedicine

• Scaling & Mainstreaming
  - Institutional Policies & Enabling Environment
  - Stakeholder Buy-In
  - Involving the Private sector

Moderator:  Professor Dzvimbo, CEO, African Virtual University, Nairobi Kenya

4:00pm – 4:15pm  Coffee/Tea Break
4:15 – 5:30pm  **Session 3- Training & Capacity-Building**

Training and capacity building are essential for effective for implementation and sustainability, and for scaling and mainstreaming. What are the best strategies for building adequate capacity? What are the essential elements that must be taken into account? How should they be planned and sequenced? What are implementation issues? How will adequate training and capacity building activities be financed on a short and longer-term basis? How can SSA institutions better harness existing resources through increased regional collaboration. How can international partnerships and African Diaspora be leveraged? Participants will share the benefit of their own experience and knowledge and make recommendations based on lessons learned. The session discussions will include:

- Requirements
- Implementation Issues
- Sustainable Staff Development
- Partnerships, Communities of Practice and Content Consortia

**Moderator:**  Professor Parahoo, Director, J B Centre for Distance Learning (CDL)
*University of Mauritius*

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**SEPTMBER 27**

9:00am – 11:30 am:  **Session 4 – Way Forward**
(Coffee Break 10:30-10:45)

- **Funding & Financing Strategies**
- Summary of Findings and Recommendations
- Developing an Action Plan/Next Steps
  - Engaging key Stakeholders – Govt. & Tertiary Institutions
  - Engaging Regional Agencies & International Partners
  - Constituting an Action Group/Forum

**Moderator:**  Professor Ajayi, Director-General,
*National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Nigeria*

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End
## PARTICIPANTS

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Representation/Affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cameroon</td>
<td>Professor Charles Owono Onana</td>
<td>Director, School of Engineering, University of Yaounde</td>
<td>Tertiary Ed Institutional Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ghana</td>
<td>Professor Anamuah Mensah</td>
<td>Vice Chancellor, University of Education, Winneba</td>
<td>Teacher Training/Tertiary Ed Institutional Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ghana</td>
<td>Mr. William Tevie,</td>
<td>Chief Technology Officer, Network Computer Systems (NCS), Accra</td>
<td>Private Sector ICT organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Ghana</td>
<td>PaulEffah</td>
<td>Executive Secretary, National Council for Tertiary Education</td>
<td>National Tertiary Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Mauritania</td>
<td>Ahmedou Ould Houaba</td>
<td>Dean of Faculty of Science, University of Mauritania</td>
<td>Tertiary Ed Institutional Leadership/ Science Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mauritius</td>
<td>Mr. Sher Kalam Azad PARAHOO</td>
<td>Director of the J B Centre for Distance Learning (CDL) University of Mauritius</td>
<td>SSA Tertiary DE &amp; Mixed Mode Expert/ Institutional Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Nigeria</td>
<td>Professor Adebaw Akinsola</td>
<td>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife,</td>
<td>SSA Tertiary Expert/Institutional Leadership/Medical Professional</td>
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<td>10. Nigeria/Hong Kong</td>
<td>Professor Olugbemiro Jegede</td>
<td>Director-General, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)/ Director, Centre for Research in Distance &amp; Adult Learning, The Open University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>International DE/e-learning Expert</td>
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<td>11. Rwanda</td>
<td>Professor Silas Lwakabamba</td>
<td>Rector, Kigali Institute of Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>Tertiary Ed Institutional Leadership</td>
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<td>12. Rwanda</td>
<td>Albert Nsengiyumva</td>
<td>ICT Director, Université Nationale du Rwanda</td>
<td>ICT/E-learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Senegal</td>
<td>Mademba Cisse</td>
<td>Senior Vice President Business Development AfriHUB, Inc. Dakar, Ex VP Iridium, Director ITU, Manager, Intelsat</td>
<td>Private Sector/International Telecom Expert</td>
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<td>14. Tanzania</td>
<td>Professor Beda Mutaghywa</td>
<td>Professor of Engineering &amp; Director of University ICT Center, University of Dar-Es-Salaam</td>
<td>SSA Tertiary ICT Expert/Institutional Leadership</td>
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<td>15. SSA Regional Agency/ Ethiopia</td>
<td>Professor Habtamu Zewdie</td>
<td>UNESCO-IICBA &amp; Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa</td>
<td>SSA Regional Capacity-Building Agency/ Tertiary Ed Institutional Leadership</td>
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<td>16. International/ SSA Regional Agency Senegal</td>
<td>Olivier Sagna</td>
<td>Director, Campus numérique francophone de Dakar West Africa Bureau, Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)</td>
<td>SSA Regional Higher Education Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. International/ SSA Regional Agency Ghana</td>
<td>Alice Lamptey</td>
<td>Coordinator, ADEA Working Group on Higher Education</td>
<td>Regional Tertiary Education Agency</td>
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<td>18. SSA Regional /Multi-country Kenya</td>
<td>Professor Peter Dzvimbo</td>
<td>CEO, African Virtual University (AVU)</td>
<td>SSA Regional Virtual University</td>
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<td>19. Canada</td>
<td>Professor Asha Kanwar</td>
<td>DE &amp; Higher Education Specialist, Indira Ghandi Open University, India (IGNOU)/ Commonwealth of Learning (COL)</td>
<td>International Distance Education Institution/ International Distance Education Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. USA</td>
<td>Professor Dick Larson</td>
<td>Director, Center for Advanced Educational Services, MIT</td>
<td>Higher Ed Pedagogical Innovations/ e-learning Expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. USA</td>
<td>John Milam</td>
<td>Managing Director HigherEd.org, Inc. Stephens City, Virginia</td>
<td>International e-learning Expert</td>
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