

CONCEPT NOTE

African Ministerial Forum on ICT integration in Education & Training

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Tunis, Tunisia

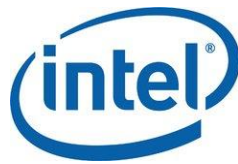
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Association for the
Development
of Education
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1. Introduction

Recently, several reports refer to Africa as the continent of the future. The World Bank's semi-annual "Global Economic Prospects" includes sixteen African countries among the thirty economies with the highest growth estimate for 2013 and 2014. Africa Progress Report 2012 notes that seven of the world's fastest-growing economies are in Africa, while, on the other side, more than thirty million African children are still out of school and the continent will not be able to achieve universal primary education for all by 2015.

The African Development Bank's "Africa in 50 Years' Time" states that the future of Africa will be determined by the ability of its economies to meet the challenges ahead by "investing in their cities, managing migration, transforming agriculture, managing their natural resources better, and making concerted efforts to break in at the bottom of the global market in goods and services."

ADEA's Ouagadougou *Triennale 2012* addressed the question of Africa's capacity to achieve the above in an increasingly competitive and globalized world. It came out clearly that much will depend on the ability of African societies and economies to foster education and training systems that produce critical knowledge, skills and qualifications which are needed for the continent's sustainable development.

In this context, one of the main issues, today, is whether actual African education and training systems are designing and implementing orientations and strategies that will help meeting

present challenges and also support the building of the human capital necessary to drive the continent's sustainable development and inclusive growth.

According to UNESCO Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2012, in dealing with immediate challenges, Africa will have to provide learning opportunities to more than 30 million out-of-school children of primary school age, hire more than 1 million teachers in less than 2 years (representing nearly 1/3 of its actual number of teachers) and find effective solutions for the persisting issues related to the availability and relevance of school manuals. Achieving these objectives will require further investing in relevant education and training systems that provides quality-learning opportunities for all, while resources are already scarce. It is thus urgent that Africa's education and training systems not only improve their capacities to design, plan and implement policies and strategies but also develop innovative, sustainable and cost efficient approaches to improve quality and access.

2. Rationale: Required paradigm shifts and *relevant and effective ICT integration in education and training*

Today, interest in the potential of ICTs to transform learning experiences and outcomes in Africa usually translates into technological deployment. In most cases, it is the result of strong political will, and development and implementation of ICT integration in education and training policies are usually entrusted to technology experts.

The integration of ICTs in education and training has been, and still is, a challenge to many education and training systems. This situation is due to several factors, including:

- (i) ICT policies, strategies, or even projects, developed without strong involvement and leadership of educational actors mainly stress investment in technology and end up producing ill-informed implementation strategies leading to mismatch between technological deployment and the capacity of education and training systems to assimilate technology-driven innovation and update pedagogic practices accordingly;
- (ii) the process seeks to get a very innovative and fast moving sector, i.e. ICT, to contribute to the development of education and training systems, which are considered to be relatively conservative; and
- (iii) major actors of the IT industry were not well established and represented, which has inhibited interaction between the educational community and the IT industry, a critical factor to the emergence of ecosystems that would help develop the knowledge, skills and partnerships necessary for large-scale, relevant and effective ICT integration.

Researches and policy review conducted by UNESCO and ADEA-ICT Task force show that there are nowadays a considerable number of initiatives to introduce ICTs in education and training systems in Africa, and we now have a pool of African and international pool of experts with sufficient knowledge in this field. Thus, conditions are in place to support African education and training systems' quest to enter a phase of *methodical and programmed ICT integration by developing relevant and effective National Policies and Strategies of ICT Integration in Education & Training* in order to:

- a. catalyze and accelerate the necessary transformation of education and training systems by improving relevance and quality and increasing access, in lines with objectives of national education policies;
- b. empower learners with the critical ICT knowledge, skills and qualifications to become full actors of knowledge society and drive and enable sustainable development; and,
- c. provide learning and skills development opportunities to marginalized populations, including female and rural learners.

Entering a phase of methodical and programmed ICT integration would imperatively require operating few paradigm shifts deemed very critical for the successful development and implementation of relevant and effective policies and strategies. These paradigm shifts are:

- Development and implementation of ICT integration strategies should be driven by education policy objectives and, therefore, led by ministries in charge of education and training.
- ICT integration should be learning-oriented, which in turn will have implication such as redefining pedagogic approaches and the roles and responsibilities of ministries in charge of education and training with respect to providing the needed technologies.
- Education is the responsibility of All, not only that of governments, education policy-makers, administrators and experts. This implies that only partnership-based approaches – among ministries, civil society, agencies, private sector - will lead to expected outcomes of ICT integration.

3. Strategic goal of the African Ministerial Forum on ICT in education and training:

The African Development Bank, UNESCO, OIF, Intel, and ADEA, partnering together, are committed to create a regional policy dialogue mechanism to assist member states to harness potentials of ICT to achieve the goal of quality education for all. As the launch activity of this regional policy dialogue mechanism, the first Ministerial Forum will be held on December 9, 10 and 11 in Tunis. The forum will bring together policymakers, experts, development partners and representatives of ICT private sector and civil society. The organization of this ministerial forum will therefore provide a platform for regional high-level policy dialogue and knowledge sharing on how to harness the potentials of ICT integration in:

- providing universal access to quality education and developmental opportunities to All Africans;
- equipping learners with skills that empower them to become full actors of knowledge society;
- promoting through the educational system a culture of digital literacy and creativity which are necessary for Africa to build innovation capacity for the IT industry.

The forum is also expected to provide a setting to incubate projects that can potentially be supported by the key partners of the event, or to roll out successful solutions or project models to other relevant countries.

4. Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the Ministerial Forum include:

- a. A shared understanding of *Relevant and effective ICT integration in Education and Training in Africa*, and what it implies in terms of required paradigm shifts and policy and strategy development, implementation and sustainability. This also implies:
 - raising awareness on the necessity to build strong and volunteer political commitment to engage education and training systems in methodical and programmed ICT integration.
 - Sharing Knowledge, experience, and lessons learnt to better inform approaches and identify levers of change, success and failure factors of ICT integration in education and training initiative from Africa and beyond.
- b. Promotion of a network of public sector (ministries & education and training systems, RECs, development agencies, international organizations such as ITU), private sector (Telco operators, ICT solution providers, digital and educational content developers) and civil society (diaspora, youth, ICT and education-related NGOs) actors, which is necessary to the development of the ecosystems that will foster the partnerships which are critical for the relevance and sustainability of *ICT integration in education and training* policy and strategy development and implementation.
- c. Public-private partnerships promoted between governments, educational services and contents industry and technology companies to connect and engage in dialogue on ways to foster development of innovative initiatives and approaches that promote ICT integration in education and training by developing relevant ICT educational solutions for African context.
- d. Strategies are suggested to help bridge the Learning Opportunity Access Divide within African societies - urban vs rural, gender and other marginalized populations - by identifying game-changing experiences and lessons learnt.
- e. Awareness is raised on the importance of economic benefits for private sector actors to contribute to investment in ICT integration strategies and initiatives and develop

innovative funding mechanisms based on converging interest between education policy objectives and private sector economic development.

5. Thematic areas and Structure the of Forum

5.1. Thematic areas:

The thematic areas to be addressed derive from the above-mentioned objectives. They are intended to provide conceptual and concrete answers and approaches on how identified levers can catalyze the dynamics that would pave the way for the required transformations of Africa's education and training systems through the relevant and effective integration of ICT. The selected thematic areas to be addressed during the forum are:

- Policy issues and implementation of ICT national strategies
- Content development
- Mobile learning
- Education services delivery platforms
- Utilizing ICT to expand learning opportunities for marginalized populations
- Public-private partnerships in ICT in education projects

5.2. The Structure:

The African Ministerial Forum on ICT Integration in Education and Training is structured as follows:

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Ministerial Meeting		✓	✓
High-level workshop for MoE officials	✓		
"ICT integration in Education & Training" Innovation & Partnership Exhibition	✓	✓	✓
Socialization and cultural event	✓	✓	✓

6. The participants (categories, financial resources to contribute to fund participants, etc.)

The Ministerial Forum is expected to gather approximately 200-220 participants comprising of:

- Ministers in charge of Education and training.
- Policymakers and senior technical staff from Ministries in charge of education, training and technology.
- Practitioners from the Education, Training, Technology and skills development fields (technical institutes, universities, research institutes)
- Participants from both the public and private sectors in areas that include Education, training and technology.
- IT private sector.

- Regional and international experts involved in the development and implementation of Education and training policies and ICT integration in Education and training policies (development agencies, Regional Economic Communities (RECs).
- African diaspora who have distinguished themselves in the field of ICT integration in Education and Training.

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