COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE
FOURTH MINISTERIAL ROUND TABLE ON ICT
FOR EDUCATION, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

May 25, 2011
Mlimani Conference Centre
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
The Fourth Ministerial Round Table on ICT for Education, Training and Development, was held during the Sixth eLearning Africa Conference, at the Mlimani Conference Centre in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Hosted by the Government of the Republic of Tanzania and International Conferences Workshops and Events (ICWE), and supported by the Association of African Distance Learning Centres (AADLC), the Global eSchools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI), the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), it was attended by 25 Ministers and Deputy Ministers from 21 African countries.

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This Communiqué highlights the main issues raised at the Ministerial Round Table (MRT), the theme of which was “Education Access, Quality and Equity for African Youth”.
1. EXTEND EDUCATION ACCESS AND EQUITY

With an estimated 10 million young people dropping out of school every year in sub-Saharan Africa, the MRT restated the importance of extending education access and equity with the following key messages:

1.1 Improve Completion Rates in Secondary Education

Secondary schooling is the cornerstone of education for youth. An increase in the completion of primary schooling has increased the demand for secondary schools. Enrolment ratios in secondary schools have reportedly risen in sub-Saharan Africa in recent years. However, the drop-out rate at this level remains very high and secondary education completion rates are worse. This was evident from experiences in Tanzania highlighted by Hon Dr Shukuru Kawambwa, Tanzanian Minister of Education and Vocational Training in his opening keynote address.

The MRT discussed the challenge to improve completion rates in secondary education. In doing so, it highlighted the importance of adopting a holistic approach when planning for access to quality education.

1.2 Reach Out to Rural Communities

A host of interventions highlighted the importance of promoting equity by reaching out to marginalised communities in rural areas, especially among women and youth. Here working with existing structures and organisations, such as post offices, is important. That these communities do not have access to capital resources because they are essentially ‘un-bankable’, was also identified as a major constraining factor. The establishment of skills development funds for youth and women, which can enable them to start their own business, is one mechanism that is being tried in some African countries.

1.3 Trained and Motivated Teachers are Critical for 21st Century Skills Development

A research report delivered by Dr Thierry Amoussougbu, from UNECA, revealed the need for common standards on integrating ICTs in African teacher development. These standards need to include 21st century skills development and ways to incentivise teachers and should be given prominence in national ICT and education policy. Here the role of ICTs in supporting teachers in mother tongue instruction needs added emphasis.
2. SMART PLANNING

The success or failure of ICT in education projects is highly dependent on the way they have been designed and planned. The MRT highlighted the following key messages about making sound education project design choices:

2.1 Recognize Worst Practices in ICTs in Education

Mr Mike Trucano of the World Bank proposed that, in addition to drawing on examples of good practice, when designing ICT-based interventions in education and skills development, it is also worthwhile considering how not to design ICT in Education programmes. Drawing on the 10 worst practices that should be avoided, and sharing what these are, could be valuable for the effective design and implementation of such programmes.

2.2 Find Smarter Ways to Mobilize Financial Resources

Based on her experience as Director of AgeNTIC in Benin, Ms Gilleta Mouyabi Gbanhoun, expressed the value of considering constraints to sustainability, such as poor infrastructure, human resource capacity and limited financial resources in the design stage of projects. In response, the MRT discussed the need for smarter ways to mobilise resources, which should include creative arrangements with the banking sector and an analysis of the role that they can play in support of effective youth employability strategies.

2.3 Ministers Can Make Good Technology Choices

Ministers raised many questions about the challenges they face in making sound technology choices in the face of an increasing array of solutions for education. This matter was raised as a concern for policy, planning and practice. Here total cost of ownership, educational value and pedagogical use are all factors to be considered in guiding effective decision making on technology choices.
3. CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDE NEEDED

A few speakers commented on the need for a change in approach, attitude and behaviour when addressing educational and skills challenges in Africa.

3.1 African Youth - A Vast Reservoir of Talent

Based on an issues paper delivered by Dr Patti Swarts from GeSCI, the MRT highlighted the need for African youth to be viewed as a vast reservoir of talent that should be exploited as part of attempts to re-engineer national education and training systems. Investing in further education and training colleges and learnership programs with the private sector and youth employment funds in support of training unemployed youth, should be matters for strategic policy consideration.

3.2 Foster an Attitude of Self Reliance Among African Youth

In providing a youth perspective on education transformation, Mr MacDaniel A. Powell, from the Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Liberia, suggested that education systems need to encourage an attitude of self-reliance among youth. He highlighted four qualities which can help encourage self-reliance:

1. Take responsibility for your actions; take the blame
2. Be informed
3. Know where you are going and be proactive
4. Decide for yourself - think for yourself

3.3 Develop a Culture of Entrepreneurship

Mr Lawrence Mafuru, CEO of the National Bank of Commerce, Tanzania, suggested that entrepreneurship requires innovation, financing and business acumen. He said that a lack of business acumen hampers the development of entrepreneurship and he highlighted the importance of imparting skills at an early age for private sector business development. However, the private sector must be encouraged by the development of an enabling environment, which draws it into partnership to help in providing long-term solutions. He urged governments to redesign their education and training curricula to embrace entrepreneurship.

Dr Dinah Mwinzi from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in Kenya emphasised the need for polytechnics to produce self-reliant graduates who don’t need to look for a job after graduating but who can learn to create jobs and generate income.
3.4 Education Ministers Encouraged to Use Social Media

Mr Allan Kakinda from Schoolnet Uganda/IEARN spoke about his personal experience with accessing digital technologies from an Internet café in Kampala and how he used this opportunity to participate in a few international and pan-African programmes. He encouraged Government Ministers to use social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, as forums to engage with young people and understand their perspective.

The above key points are systemically inter-related and the role of leaders and policy decision makers can make a decisive difference to the success or failure of ICT-related interventions in education, training and skills development programmes.

RECOMMENDATION: Towards a more outcomes-based, action-oriented MRT

This year’s MRT was attended by a record number of Ministers and Deputy Ministers. It also provided a forum for a lively exchange of opinions, information and experience between leading figures in the development and implementation of African education policy and planning.

It was clear that the MRT continues to provide a valuable opportunity for discussion between key interest groups and African governments.

However, many participants expressed a clear desire to see the MRT focus not only on the discussion of important emerging issues, but also on the achievement of specific outcomes.

ICWE will, therefore, work with African governments to follow up on this recommendation and develop specific proposals for the creation of an appropriate modus operandi. Draft proposals will be circulated to all participants by the 31st October 2011.

CONCLUSION

The MRT raised critical issues about education transformation and the use of digital technologies in varying African contexts to aid this. It was an occasion for the discussion of common efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals and the related Education For All objectives. It provided an opportunity to share ideas and experiences as well as a platform for building relationships and networks. As the foundations for a learning community of policy makers and practitioners have been laid, significant progress has been made towards the achievement of the initial objectives.
Quick Facts eLearning Africa

**Website**  www.elearning-africa.com

**Year of Foundation**  2006

**Participants**  1,702 participants from over 90 countries

**Exhibition**  52 exhibitors from 16 countries from all sectors (education, corporate, public and government) including: eLearning manufacturers, suppliers and service providers, development agencies, NGOs, IGOs, government institutions, Ministries of education that offer the following products and services: hardware development; social networking services; social media; collaborative working environments; media tools; Open Educational Resources (OER); content; certification, accreditation, assessment, examination and testing tools; simulation; game-based learning; legal and regulatory services; learning platforms; learning environments; development tools; computing infrastructures; intelligent solutions; content management and management systems.

**Participation structure**

**Region Representation**

- **Africa** 86%
- **Europe** 9%
- **Asia** 2%
- **America** 3%
Supporters 2011

European Commission DG Information Society and Media

German Federal Institute of Vocational Education and Training

UNESCO-UNEVOC, UNECA

Organisers 2011

ICWE GmbH – International Conferences, Workshops and Exhibitions

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