5TH MINISTERIAL ROUND TABLE
Education and Sustainable Financing in Africa

MAY 23, 2012

COMMUNIQUÉ

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Communiqué: 5th Ministerial Round Table on Education and Sustainable Financing

The 5th Ministerial Round Table (MRT) on Education and Sustainable Financing in Africa, was hosted by the Government of Benin and ICWE GmbH in association with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. It was attended by Ministers of Education and ICT from Benin, Cameroon, Kenya, Namibia, Niger and Uganda, as well as representatives of Ministers of Education from Burkina Faso and Tanzania and representatives of the Minister of Post and Telecommunications of Cote d'Ivoire. This MRT was held on 23 May 2012 in Cotonou, Benin. The MRT noted with concern that:

1. The education systems in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries have expanded substantially over the past four decades but the resources available to support this expansion have declined.

2. The numbers enrolling in primary education have multiplied by 5.5, from 23 million in 1970 to 129 million in 2008. Secondary school enrolment grew by a factor of 8.5, from 4 million to 36 million. Tertiary enrolment increased by a factor of 22.3, from 0.2 million to 4.5 million and pre-primary enrolment by a factor of 2.6, from 4.3 million to 10.9 million between 1990 and 2008. This shows the highest proportional increase in tertiary enrolment in four decades.

3. Africa is the only region in the world where there has been a decline in public expenditure per student in higher education between 1991 and 2006; whereas the number of tertiary students has tripled between 1991 and 2006.

4. The number of school teachers needed in SSA to reach the Education for All goals by 2015 is 1.9 million.

5. The number of tertiary education teachers required would need to double, from a total of approximately 456,000 in 2006 to 908,000 by 2015.

6. Donor aid to education in Africa has been in decline in recent years and proportionally more public expenditure has been allocated to basic education relative to higher education.

7. The region is also challenged by a declining quality of education delivery. This has been influenced by the large number of unqualified and under-qualified teachers in public schools and underpaid and demotivated lecturers and professors in African public universities.
8. The number of unemployed is rising, particularly among youth in Africa and within this, the 'educated unemployed' because education institutions have not adapted to the development of skills that are required by the labour market.

9. Higher Education Institutions are confronted with 5 critical 'disconnects':
   a. The gap between higher education delivery and the skill requirements of employers
   b. A weak research and technology nexus between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and companies
   c. A separation between teaching and research functions
   d. A separation between HEIs themselves and between these institutions and training providers
   e. A separation between HEIs and earlier education institutions such as schools

The MRT acknowledges the following actions that have been taken by African governments to address the crisis:

1. Governments have allocated significant proportions of their budget to education. In Kenya, 13% of the national budget is allocated to education compared to 23% in Namibia and 40% in Senegal. Included within this are budgets for ICT investment in education.

2. Education institutions have also learned to generate their own income. Overall, public HEIs in Africa generate about 30% of their income.

3. Some countries, like Uganda, are implementing dual-track tuition policies whereby a certain number of free (or very low-cost) university places are awarded based on criteria such as academic excellence, income level, or positive discrimination, whilst other places are available on a tuition fee-paying basis or deferred-tuition policy.

4. In some Francophone countries, such as Benin, public universities have chosen to charge fees for professional programmes or programmes of excellence.

5. Private higher education has grown in Africa. In 2006 22% of higher education students were enrolled in private HEIs in 2006.
6. 45 African countries have developed national ICT policies. A recent World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Survey reported that in 2010, Kenya spent 2.8% of its national budget on ICT investment compared to Mali which spent 2.3% and Morocco, 2.7%.

7. Overall investment in ICT is set to increase and as a result of this, access to ICT, as well as the use of it, is changing.

8. An estimated 51 African countries have also adopted some form of ICT in education policies, which have provided an enabling environment for the integration of ICT in schools and universities.

9. Burundi reportedly has access to ICT in all secondary schools; in 8 states of Nigeria 62% of schools have computers, 24% of schools have internet access and 14% of schools have websites.

10. Benin is constructing a digital network for education.

11. Namibia has established a Universal Access Fund to support access to ICT in rural areas and taxation strategies to encourage private companies to invest some of their profit in community development are being considered.

12. In Niger, investment has been made in using mobile technologies to support adult literacy development and a programme to support the e-training of teachers has recently been launched.

13. The Kenya Institute in Education has embarked on a number of programmes focused on integrating ICT in classroom teaching and learning, based on localised digitised curriculum content.

14. In Cameroon, secondary schools have adopted a model where parents contribute 10 dollars in support of ICT integration at the schools.

15. In Tanzania, HEIs have embarked on cost-sharing between the private sector and government, in order to expand access to students.

The MRT recommends that policy makers and decisionmakers consider the following:

1. Explore alternative mechanisms for financing education.

2. Consider the privatisation of HEIs compared with establishing private HEIs.
3. Address the limitations of privatisation. These include a limited national private sector and formal economic sectors.

4. Mobilise the potential of the African diaspora whose resources can be harnessed to invest in education.

5. Engage the national and international private sector more vigorously.


7. Strengthen the opportunity provided by modern technologies, such as massive open online courses where millions of students are registered.

8. Learn from the wide range of experiences across the globe with pedagogically efficient and ways of integrating a wide range of technologies for learning in the classroom, outside the classroom, for peer learning and personalised learning.

9. Consider financial models that include public-private partnerships, including with commercial banks. A number of banks in West Africa are reportedly interested to invest in this way.

10. The sustainability of the environment is increasingly becoming a critical concern. In this context, consideration should be given to the importance of e-waste policies in education and the need to draw on the Kenyan experience with e-waste management.

11. Sustaining African culture is also a crucial area of concern. Here the role of sustaining local African languages is a challenge. In this respect, lessons can be learned from the ERELA experience in Cameroon, which uses ICT to promote education delivery in local languages and which digitises local languages. This also enables reach into rural areas.

**In conclusion**, the discussions at this MRT have highlighted crucial issues of concern which can only be addressed through concerted action. It is recommended that the Government hosting the MRT assumes the responsibility to distribute this Communiqué to all Ministers of Education and ICT in Africa and to monitor progress with the implementation of the MRT recommendations.
Quick Facts eLearning Africa

Website
www.elearning-africa.com

Year of Foundation
2006

Participants
1,483 participants from 66 countries

Exhibition
55 exhibitors from 15 countries from all sectors (education, corporate, public and government) including: eLearning manufacturers, suppliers and service providers, development agencies, NGOs, IGOs, government institutions, and ministries of education, offering 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

GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION

- Africa 89%
- Europe 6%
- North America 3%
- Asia 2%

SECTORAL REPRESENTATION

- Academic (Education) 59%
- Public Sector (Government/Int. Orgs) 20%
- Corporate (Business) 15%
- Civil Society (Association/NGOs) 6%

Organisers 2012

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