



INNOVATING EDUCATION IN AFRICA EXPO 2019

Harnessing the Capacity of ICT to ensure Inclusion, Quality and Impact in Education and Training in Africa

CONCEPT NOTE

1. Background and Context

Education and training remain the bedrock for human empowerment, inclusive prosperity and progressive development. However, this education has to be accessed by all, under all circumstances, including refugees and displaced persons; it must be of highest possible quality, included well equipped and motivated teachers; and must be aligned to continental aspirations and expectations as articulated in Agenda 2063.

African education systems have continued to expand with the burgeoning population, and strengthened local investment, considering that education is a human right. This expansion is challenged by the cost of maintaining quality, and the cost of ensuring that every learner is accommodated, in spite of various abilities and learning needs. Expansion of STEM education in particular has become a major pre-occupation, given the fact that the needs of the labour market and the demands for innovation require that all learners and teachers acquire significant knowledge and competences in STEM, or be completely left out of the changing employment market.

There is need to innovate education development, provision and delivery, taking advantage of the digital revolution. As the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) states, ICT is a major tool for ensuring universal access, quality of provision and delivery, and empowerment of school graduates for meaningful personal lives, and contribution to social economic development. ICT opens up possibilities for innovation, entrepreneurship and employability; flexibility in pedagogies; beating the limitation of time and space for varied learner needs; and simply enhancing confidence and dignity of graduates at all levels.

An important constituency that is in the limelight this year 2019 is the group of forcibly displaced persons- refugees. With education as a right, refugees must have continuing uninterrupted access to quality education wherever they find themselves. With limited numbers of teachers and the pressure to expand provision, ICT will provide an important interim as well as facilitative option, while efforts are undertaken to build capacity of education systems. With expanded and varied provision, the challenge of management demands ICT enhanced Education Management Information Systems, which will facilitate inclusion and quality of data for education planning.

The teacher remains an essential piece of the quality education fabric, and must not be disenfranchised by the digital emergence. It will be necessary to innovate fast-tracking of building Teachers IT competence. Schools and colleges must rise to the occasion and establish IT readiness, where ICTs will be veritable tools for campus management, safety and sustainability; as well as tools for enhancing efficiency in all educational activities.

To contend with these issues, education systems have to develop new and innovative approaches at all levels from government policies to classroom teaching methods and informal learning, with the aim of empowering learners and teachers to adapt to their changing environments. This must be done urgently in order that we achieve the goals we have set for ourselves in Agenda 2063 and SDGs, as unpacked in the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA).

It is evident that numerous innovations exist where ICTs are being used to ensure access, quality, learning processes and outcomes, as well as education management and organization. It is essential that we identify these innovations and show-case them in a way that celebrates and encourages the innovators, while making the innovations visible and accessible to all Member States for replication and adoption.

Against this background, the African Union Commission will hold the Second Edition of the Innovating Education in Africa Expo in **Gaborone – Botswana, from 20th–22nd August, 2019.**

A Call for submission of ICT based education innovations that are being successfully applied in African education systems will be made from **February 2019 – 30 April 2019.** The Call will be for individuals or organizations, including government, non-government and for profit agencies; whose innovations have been confirmed to make a difference in the African context, and have potential for wide application in Member States.

2. Purpose of the Event

In light of this context, and building on the success of the Innovating Education in Africa Expo 2018 held in Senegal, the African Union Commission is working with several partner agencies across Africa to organize an occasion to showcase ICT-based technical and social innovations in every area of education and training.

The event is aimed at raising the visibility of these innovative practices in order that they can be supported, up-scaled, replicated or further developed. It will also be an opportunity to celebrate African innovators, and expose them to networks of potential markets, advisors and sponsors of their work.

The event will include exhibitions, demonstrations of selected innovations, as well as presentation of technical papers on the subject of ICT in Education, by academics, practitioners and policy makers.

The focus will be on the following:

- i. Advocacy for education innovation and strengthened continental collaboration.

- ii. Engaging in important debates and discussions on the full range of pressing education challenges and opportunities related to ICT in education, with diverse practitioners, policy makers, business sector and financiers committed to supporting and promoting innovation in education.

3. Specific Objectives

- i. Identify, profile and showcase ICT based innovative education solutions from across the continent for possible support including further development and replication
- ii. Provide a platform for education practitioners, policy makers, business sector and partners to exchange experiences, policies and challenges in enhancing education and learning outcomes through ICT based education innovation in Africa
- iii. Encourage and enhance research and innovation in education
- iv. Encourage the involvement of the business sector in education and skills development
- v. Build capacity of Member States officials in strengthening the role of ICT in education.

4. Participants

This is an important and valuable event that is expected to be attended by the following, among others:

- Government Ministers responsible for education, training, science and technology
- Senior government officials in education, workforce development and innovation spheres
- National and International agencies working in education related fields
- Practitioners
- Private Sector
- Civil Society
- Policy makers
- Inventors and social innovators
- Producers of school equipment

The organization of the event and the diversity of participants is expected to broaden the education debate, while focusing on critical opportunities and challenges around enhancing the competitiveness, productivity and efficiency of education through innovation, with a focus on the place of ICT and digitization.

5. Venue and Format of the Event:

The Innovating Education in Africa Expo 2019 shall be hosted by the Government of Botswana, Ministry of Basic Education in Gaborone, Botswana in August 2019.

Innovations will be identified through Calls for Submissions at local and international levels. The innovations must be ICT based, and have demonstrated impact in an African context, with potential for wide dissemination. Innovations being sought for include both technical inventions and social innovations that are enhancing access, quality, relevance, school security, learning achievement, financing, employability, school management and so on. As is the practice, a distinguished panel will assess the papers and the innovative education solutions to be presented at the event.

i. Exhibition

The event shall have a diverse range of interactive, creative sessions offering participants numerous opportunities to share their work and achievements, and to network and collaborate.

Exhibitions will include documentation, software, hardware, video and audio clips and demonstrations.

ii. Workshops and Conference

There will be a number of plenary sessions as well as several breakout sessions that will feature presentations and discussions by prominent academics, policy makers, business actors and emerging education innovators, as well as representatives from development partner organizations.

Innovative approaches at all levels of education, in employment oriented and entrepreneurship education and skills development, with strong involvement of the African business sector will be showcased under the umbrella of '**Africa Talk Jobs**' (ATJ) as a follow-up to the major ATJ conference that took place in 2018. A panel discussion will highlight the policy recommendations derived from the conference and discuss the way forward in bringing African youth into jobs through innovative education.

Papers accepted for presentation will be original work not previously published. Young African women and men researchers and innovators are especially encouraged to submit papers and share their work, with a view to expanding their networks.

6. Sponsorship

On submitting innovations and papers, authors and innovators will be requested to indicate whether they require support to cover expenses (travel, accommodation and daily subsistence allowance) associated with their participation at the event. Only one author per paper and one person per innovation accepted for presentation will be eligible for support. Limited support will be available for presenters, young researchers and education innovators from Africa.

6. Expected Outputs

The outputs of the Expo will include:

- i. Expo Report: a summary of key findings and messages of key policy and developmental relevance distilled from conference papers, innovations and keynote speeches
- ii. Conference Proceedings: papers accepted for the conference will be published in the proceedings book and on African Union Website.
- iii. Education Innovators handbook: collection of the innovations that will be exhibited during the event, providing information on the innovators and their contacts
- iv. Expanded membership of the Africa Education Innovators Network

Agencies interested in supporting education development in Africa are invited to participate as sponsors, as well as presenters. Send your offer and request to Dr. Beatrice Njenga, Head of Education Division - njengab@africa-union.org.