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SPIDER supports teacher training in Tanzania

In 2004, the Government of Tanzania launched an ambitious plan to expand its secondary school system. In 2003, there were only 649 secondary schools but more than a thousand schools were built the following year.

This created an acute shortage of teachers in the secondary schools. To address this shortage of teachers graduates from secondary school were given a few weeks of training and then sent out to the new schools.

Today, there are about 30 000 teachers in secondary schools in Tanzania, of which about 11 000 are "short course trained". SPIDER is currently working together with the Tanzanian Government and the Open University of Tanzania to develop in-service training models and learning material, in order to improve the performance of all the short course trained teachers.

By exploiting the rapid expansion of mobile networks in Tanzania, the student can gain access to course material and supervisors locally through a standard mobile phone, using SMS, voice and even video.

E-learning

Access to education, knowledge and information is essential for human development. Basic education, and indeed literacy is often a prerequisite for exercising the full realm of roles and responsibilities associated with citizenship. Proliferation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can also contribute to increasing access to independent information through interpersonal mobile phone networks, web portals, and online news sites outside government control.

In the education sector, ICT can support a number of vital functions including: improved tools and systems for educational planning, enhanced access to education for excluded people, improved teaching skills through online training, access to new teaching materials, and development and distribution of curriculums adapted to the local context.

Education - a human right and foundation for development

In 1990, during a UNSECO-sponsored conference on education, 155 countries came together and adopted the World Declaration on Education for All. The world later renewed its commitment to education in the Millennium Development Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education by the end of 2015. These commitments, in combination with international and national investments, have resulted in vast improvements in access to education in many parts of the world. Despite these gains, education and learning must still remain in our focus.

Not only is education an individual human right, but it is essential for the development of societies. Knowledge, skills and norms are acquired through formal education, as well as through informal learning processes. In a world with close to 6 billion people in need of both basic education and skills development, radically new strategies for lifelong learning

must be developed. With 776 million adults worldwide still lacking basic reading and writing skills, and 75 million children of primary school age not in school, the challenges are daunting. Information and communication technologies for education and learning can and should be part of the solution.

New possibilities with ICT

In some countries, radio and TV have been providing educational programming for years. Today new technologies have the potential to supplement these programmes and significantly increase access to education. Although the Internet is not widely available in most developing countries, the rapid expansion of mobile networks and subscribers in most developing countries holds a promise for connecting teachers, learners, and communities. The cost for the end user to gain access to mobile communication is comparatively low and expected to decrease even more. This is a technology that not only has enormous future potential, but is readily and widely available now.

The term e-learning covers a range of ICT applications, such as the use of computers in the classroom to complete online distance education programmes for both children and adults. E-learning is scalable, and it has multiple modalities of communication, visualisation and simulation elements,

and almost unlimited space for storage of information. ICT opens new opportunities for providing access to educational resources and courses for large numbers of learners who have previously been geographically disadvantaged. ICT also has the potential to help groups that have traditionally been excluded from education due to cultural reasons or belonging to a disadvantaged social category, including ethnic minorities, girls and women and people with disabilities.

ICT make asynchronous learning possible, that is, learning characterised by a time lag between the delivery of instruction and its reception by learners. ICT-based educational programming also dispenses with the need for all the learners and the instructor to be in one physical location.

In addition, virtual classes facilitate personalised monitoring and hence greater autonomy in the acquisition of knowledge. Apart from formal educational settings, the Internet is becoming the foremost medium of self-instruction by providing tools for informal learning and peer-to-peer collaboration. In conclusion, ICT supports mass-individualisation, allowing individuals to study at their own level, pace and location. ICTs also facilitate access to key individuals - mentors, experts, researchers, professionals, business leaders, and peers - all over the world.

The Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions, SPIDER, was constituted in 2004. The mission is to assist developing countries with promotion and deployment of ICTs for combating the digital divide and reducing poverty, in line with the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). SPIDER is governed by a board with representatives from senior management of Swedish Universities and private companies.

Read more at www.spidercenter.org



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Read more on e-learning

UNESCO's Towards a Knowledge Society
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org>

Development Gateway Portal
<http://www.zunia.org/cat/e-learning>

Educational Technology Debate
<http://www.edutechdebate.org>

<http://www.eldis.org>



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