

AfDB, AVU discuss benefits of e-learning

The main objective of the first international conference African Virtual University organised, was to discuss the future of e-learning in Africa and the role of Open Education Resources (OERs) including the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in the ICT learning revolution.



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"We consider the African Virtual University (AVU) Project very critical to the effort to improve access to higher education in Africa and are pleased to learn that the deliberations on the integration of e-learning and open education into mainstream education programs was fruitful," concluded Stefan Muller, lead economist of the African Development Bank's (AfDB) East Africa Regional Resource Center (EARC).

Under the topic "Integrating eLearning and Open Education to Increase Access to Quality Education and Training", the conference brought together more than 100 participants including ministries of education and 22 universities from the Multinational AVU support project* as well as the private sector.

ICT revolution in Africa

"The conference is very timely, it is taking place at a time of ICT revolution in Africa. It is critical for the Bank to 'seize the moment' and ensure that regional member countries harness ICT technologies that will result not only in increased access, but also facilitate quality and relevance of education," said Ruth Charo, principal social development specialist, AfDB EARC.

"OERs, including MOOCs, have the potential to enhance access to quality education. However, certification and accreditation for the OERs has to be looked into. In all countries, especially in Africa, certification as an evidence of one having acquired training is almost mandatory. Networking and partnerships among institutions in Africa and the West will be critical to achieve this," she added.

In addition to OERs and MOOCs, discussion also centered on ICT infrastructure including access to e-learning and mobile learning; accreditation and quality assurance in e-learning; management of e-learning; and gender aspects in e-learning.

Benefitting from AfDB funding, the AVU Capacity Enhancement Program (ACEP) launched a training in November 2013 to equip AVU's partner institutions with e-learning skills in areas such as ICT instructional processes, technology support and management of e-learning. AVU is also considering the delivery of the ACEP program on MOOCs.

13 Learning modules

To this purpose, a feasibility analysis is being conducted to ensure issues such as certification and quality assurance are given the necessary attention. The ICT-enhanced curriculum structures for Teacher Education Program in Maths and Sciences have been shared with the universities for review after which the specific ICT-enhanced modules authoring will begin. The professional development program offers today 13 learning modules for open distance and e-learning programs, including materials development and instructional design, governance, management and financing of open, distance and e-learning programs .

**AVU works with universities in Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, and Tanzania*

Source: APO (African Press Organisation)

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