

**Organisation Intergouvernementale
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*Au service de l'innovation,
de la modernisation et de la construction
d'administrations pour
une Gouvernance Publique Responsable*

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**Pan African Intergovernmental
Organization**

*Serving innovation,
modernization and establishment
of administrations for
Responsible Public Governance*

Original: French

High Level Seminar on:

Capacity Building of African Universities in Popularizing Distance Education Through the Use of ICT

Concept-Paper

**5th - 7th April 2021
Tunis (Tunisia)**

I- Context and justification

Africa is pluralistic, this is what makes it rich and unique because it is multilingual, intelligent and creative. It is generally agreed that Africa still has much to contribute to such a complex and multifaceted world. To do so, Africa needs more than ever one or more universities capable of highlighting this richness and this variety. Open university(ies) and training spaces capable of embracing and reflecting this diversity. However, for the past 15 years, everything seems to be making higher education in Africa the poor relation of African education systems (lack of infrastructure, escape of researchers abroad, economic crisis, Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) ...).

Many observers see the digital revolution as a realistic promise for Africa. However, the stakes are high and the challenges too.

Across the continent, digital projects are multiplying and most African universities are turning to MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). It is true that digital technology has made some extraordinary exploits, but it should not be overlooked that for several categories / regions (villages, poor people, etc.), this digital revolution has not been successful, especially during the health crisis due to Covid 19 (Lack of computers, weak network, unstable electricity, etc.).

The Covid 19 health crisis has disrupted the structure of education in Africa, revealing the vulnerability and precariousness of African education systems. What is certain is that the crisis has prompted countries to rethink their education systems so that they are better prepared, if not better equipped, to face such trials. Africa has learned from this experience many lessons.

In the same way, it is necessary with regard to the above to ask several questions:

1. What capacities should be strengthened to make African universities vectors of development and popularization of distance education through the use of ICTs?
2. What legal and institutional framework should be implemented to better meet the requirements of ICTs?
3. What partnership mechanisms and structures must be put in place to guarantee the popularization of distance education?

These few questions and many others could form the basis of this seminar that CAFRAD (Pan African International Organisation) organizes, not only to examine these different points, but also and above all, to trace the way for new strategies and new policies to enable African universities to adapt to the evolution of technology and that they resolutely turn to distance education.

II- Objectives

The main objective of the seminar is to bring together government decision-makers in the various ministries of education and top university officials, to discuss together policies and capacity building strategies of the African university with a view to transforming it into a lever for progress for the entire African continent.

The specific objectives of the seminar are the following:

- ❖ To exchange experiences and innovative best practices in progress within African universities in relation to the popularization of ICT;
- ❖ To identify the challenges of popularizing ICT and determining the mechanisms for strengthening the capacity of the African universities to make these institutions a vector of development;
- ❖ To examine the paths to follow for the African universities to fully exploit the digital revolution in research and training;
- ❖ To determine the legal and institutional framework to be put in place to be able to carry out these reforms;
- ❖ To examine the mechanisms for implementing and monitoring the conclusions of the seminar on the national and continental level.

III- Sub-themes to be discussed

The seminar will examine various themes relating to capacity building of African universities in popularizing distance education through the use of ICT, with emphasis on the following topics:

- 1- The state of play of the integration of new technologies in higher education in Africa;
- 2- What role does the university play as a popularization center for distance education?
- 3- What capacities should be strengthened so that African universities can meet the digital challenges for distance education?
- 4- What legal and institutional framework can support the process of digitizing higher education at distance, so that African universities can benefit from ICT?
- 5- What infrastructures should be put in place so that the university can fully play its role as a think tank?
- 6- What national policies and strategies to be implemented to make the African university a university of the future connected to ICTs?
- 7- What regional and continental partnerships should be envisaged to drive the digital transformation of the African university?

IV- Participants

The seminar is organized for officials and academics. These are specifically:

- ❖ Ministers (and their collaborators) in charge of higher education and scientific research;
- ❖ Rectors, Presidents, Secretaries-General, Deans and other top university officials;
- ❖ General Directors of other higher education establishments;
- ❖ Partner institutions at national and international level involved in the themes of the seminar.

V- Resource Person

The seminar will be lead by high-level experts, with broad experience in the subjects to be covered. These are senior officials, university researchers or teachers who have served in Africa and / or elsewhere, but who know the realities of African educational systems. Their role is to introduce topics for about thirty minutes, lead the discussions and participate in all of the seminar discussions.

VI- Expected results

It is expected that the seminar will serve as a platform to examine the mechanisms to be put in place to strengthen the capacities of African universities in the popularization of distance education. It is therefore, expected that participants, after taking part in the seminar, will be better prepared to initiate or influence policies and strategies that affect the future of the university. Finally, it is expected that the seminar will serve as a starting point for a series of actions to be carried out in various countries, so that the African university can resume its historic role as an engine of development. The proceedings of the seminar will be published and disseminated across Africa and elsewhere.

VII- Methodology

The work of the seminar will be carried out in a participatory and active manner. Participants will be asked present concrete cases to illustrate the themes of the discussions. After the introduction of the resource persons, the participants react with comments, questions or suggestions related to the themes. The work carried out in plenary session and in groups will be centered around the themes of the subject. Power point and other presentation methods will be used.

During the last day, group work will be considered to better study the subjects dealt with in the plenary session and make practical proposals for the implementation of the conclusions of the seminar.

Venue of the seminar: Tunisia

Duration: 3 working days

Date: 5 to 7 April 2021

Languages: French & English

For more information about the Seminar or CAFRAD, please visit our website: www.cafrad.org or contact us at the following address:

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