

**REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS USING IT HELD ON  
26<sup>TH</sup> & 27<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2002. AT RMRDC AND NITDA.**

The Honourable Minister of Science and Technology, Prof. T .T. Isoun declared the conference opened. The conference hosted by NITDA was attended by over twenty participants representing various organizations that include:

- 1) Nigerian IT Professionals in the Americas – NITPA
- 2) Nigerian Computer Society - NCS,
- 3) Computer Professionals Registration Council of Nigeria -CPN,
- 4) Education Tax Fund - ETF
- 5) National Open University of Nigeria -NOUN
- 6) Institute of Software Practitioners of Nigeria –ISPON
- 7) University of Jos -UNIJOS.
- 8) Fountsuam Foundation.

The main focus of the conference was to assess the level of the use of IT in our educational system as well as consider the areas of curricula development. This is in order to integrate IT into the educational system, especially the tertiary institutions. IT is also to be utilized to create jobs, wealth and foreign revenue through capacity building as is the case in U.S.A, India and other countries that have thoroughly embraced IT.

The HMST delivered a powerful keynote address in which the deplorable situation of the tertiary institutions was highlighted.

A total of six Presentations were made as follows:

- 1) Transforming our Institutions in the Information Age by Prof. G.O. Ajayi, D-G, NITDA.
- 2) Brief on NOUN activities by Mabogunje, Oluseun – IT Consultant to NOUN.
- 3) The Nigerian IT manifesto by Prof. M.C. Aniebonam, President, NITPA, U.S.A.
- 4) Brief Remark by Pius Okigbo, Jnr, Chairman, ISPON.
- 5) ICT in University of Jos by L.S.O. Liverpool, University of Jos.
- 6) Schoolnet Nigeria by Gbenga Arolasafe, E.T.F.

From the papers presented and discussions, the following were observed

**Observations:**

- 1) It was observed that the importance inherent in the use of IT in the educational institutions is enormous because it makes learning more accessible, promotes improved learning while it decreases per capital cost.
- 2) Access to Internet and other IT related tools of learning are very limited in all Higher Institutions in Nigeria. About 90% of schools/colleges/universities in Nigeria are

without Internet connections while less than 2% have Internet bandwidth of about 64kbps.

3) That the situation of ICT in our educational Institutions is very poor hence it should be declared an emergency and there is urgent need for a leapfrog.

4) Lack of necessary enabling infrastructures and adequate funding were identified as major constraints.

5) Need to identify problems with curricula development in the Universities. Areas to be developed within the educational system include:

Capacity building

Infrastructure building

Human capacity

Content

Security provision

#### **Efforts so far:**

The Federal Government has now recognized the importance of IT as a major key to economic growth and sustainability hence the National IT Policy was approved in March 2001. NITDA was then established to implement the Policy as well as regulate and co-ordinate IT development in Nigeria. Part of the major things that IT is to be used for in the mission statement of the National IT Policy is Education. Accordingly NITDA has in collaboration with the public and private sectors organized Awareness Programmes on the need and importance of IT in the various sectors of the national economy.

NITDA now serves as Cisco Regional Academy. NITDA is also in partnership with Cisco to roll out 20 local Network Academies in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions to aid in IT human capacity building.

NOUN has developed a blueprint for the delivery of National Open and Distance Learning Programme. With this, long life and accessible education will be delivered to Nigerians wherever they are. Study Centres are to be established in all Local Government Headquarters - a pilot scheme is to commence with 18 local government areas with 3 from each of the geo-political zones.

Education Tax Fund is to commence with the school net programme by providing ICT Infrastructures and Internet programme for our primary and secondary schools.

On the part of the higher institutions, the trend in IT development in UNIJOS was presented as having less than 10 computer lecturers 10years ago. However, with the pragmatic approach given to it through the judicious use of their Teaching and Research Vote, training of staff, making ICT a priority project and partnership with students, private sector, NGOs e.t.c. UNIJOS now has over 350-networked computers, 3,000 e-mail users and various computer centers with multimedia computers. Other Higher Institutions are to use this as a flagship to move forward.

A general report on IT situation in Nigeria was also presented indicating that eight universities currently have over 64kpbs bandwidth using VSAT connectivity, whilst others have made appreciable effort for good connectivity.

The Nigerian IT Professionals in the Americas in their manifestos proposed Global Resource Mobilization and positioning IT as the core of Nigerian National Development.

**Recommendations:**

1. Creation of an interim IT advisory board for direct and continuous engagement of all stakeholders (government, business community, academia, professional organizations, funding agencies, e.t.c).
2. Bi-annual International Conferences consisting of all major stakeholders including NITPA. One in Nigeria and another in the Americas (U.S.A., Canada.)
3. Creation of the Nigerian IT Portal to bring our capacity out to the world.
4. Development of effective tools to aid in fighting the 419 menace
5. Professional exchange programs (Between companies and organizations)
6. Establishment of on-going training programs, including the use of IT specialists from the Americas to assist in the provision of training to Nigerian Universities, Higher Educational Institutions and Businesses.
7. Passage and enforcement of the indigenization bill-Government should give priority to Nigeria Professionals in IT projects.

**Conclusions:**

1. Nigeria has come of age in its capacity but must seize the moment to utilize its human resources.
2. We have for so long used so much effort to achieve so little. Today, Ghana and RSA command more global IT respect than Nigeria...hard truth, but must be noted! We can start today to make a difference through effective nation building, capacity building and development of alliances.
3. The Nigerian IT Professionals in the Americas have demonstrated their willingness and ability along with other major stakeholders in Nigeria to be part of the solution.
4. There is the urgent need to restructure the curricula in our educational system especially the tertiary institutions in order to produce graduates that are properly equipped to face challenges of the information age.

ABUJA.

September 27, 2002.