



The Importance of Technical Infrastructure & an Enabling Enviroment: Case Study of Nigeria

Accelon's Role in the Implementation of e-Education in Nigeria

Background

- Creating an enabling education environment in Nigeria requires ICT resources to be deployed to compliment
 - Teachers' and students' access to teaching material
 - Stakeholders' access to Value Added Services
 - Management of education resources.
- To create this environment requires
 - Connectivity between schools and central resources
 - Infrastructure, ICT hardware and supporting facilities
 - Access to digital content (teaching material, management information, communication media, etc)
 - Financing of these ventures
- Accelon is a Business Communications Solutions provider, and the company was well placed to contribute to the creation of the above environment in Nigeria.

History of Accelon in e-Education

- WAEC online initiative in 2004 for examination registration
- Most Nigerian private schools enrol their students for International General Certificate of Senior Education (IGSCE) with ICT as a subject.
- IGSCE examination is conducted on-line, therefore requiring internet connectivity to these schools.
- Accelon e-Education Project (AEEP) for internet connectivity to schools was born from this requirement in 2005
- Accelon and SES Astra as partners of the Oracle Consortium are participating in the NEPAD e-Schools program, currently for 12 schools in 4 countries (Ghana, Mali, Gabon & Kenia)
- We currently have over 125 schools from all geo-political zones in Nigeria on the Accelon network.



Value Added Services Offered under the AEEP

- Free Website
- Free Domain Name
- Free Hosting
- 10% Discount on Equipment and Installation Cost
- Five Free e-Mail addresses
- Access to Accelon Grid for Education (AGE): This grid will include a portal that will allow schools to have unlimited access to global and local educational resources (pending implementation – funding constraints)

Critical Success Factors for the Growth of e-Education in Nigeria

1. Funding

- Access to funding, either direct from Government, NGO's etc, or arranged thru financial institutions.
- Financing thru banks has been successful. Accelon is working closely with Oceanic Bank who is offering financing to schools for ICT deployment.
- In Central & West Africa the Oracle Consortium of which SES and Accelon are members, has started a number of funded pilot programs under the NEPAD e-Schools initiative.

Critical Success Factors for the Growth of e-Education in Nigeria

2. Internet Access to Content

- Many international web sites providing interactive learning material exist
- Economical access to locally developed educational material is urgently needed.
- This includes access to education portals accessible by teachers, students, administrators and parents.
- Accelon provides hosting facilities for schools own web sites and access to the Accelon Grid of Education (AGE).
- A Private Public Partnership to coordinate development of education portals to serve as databases for local education material, school management information and administrative data is urgently needed. This will require clear definition of the roles of the public and private sectors, and the incentives offered by the Regulator for private sector participation.

Critical Success Factors for the Growth of e-Education in Nigeria

3. Infrastructure and Facilities.

Infrastructure build-out must make commercial sense by harnessing sunk cost where possible and to be homogeneous enough to minimise interface issues and enhance VAS distribution.

- VSAT Connectivity is most appropriate in Nigeria due to poor, or often non-existent alternative telecommunications infrastructure in most areas.
- Digital hardware and software to be made available at affordable cost to allow the masses to adopt automation as a way of life, resulting in a massive engagement of ICT in the Education Sector.
- Providing, or at least upgrading electrical power facilities on site on a cost effective basis to ensure reliable electrical power supply..
- Industry incentives could be considered by Government to companies who provide such infrastructure at affordable prices.

Conclusion

Investment in education is of paramount importance to ensure sustainable growth in Nigeria against the background of an ever increasing shortfall of adequately trained teaching resources. ICT, and more specifically low cost internet connectivity provides an extremely effective means to achieve this objective. This, in conjunction with the provision of cost effective access to content across the education value chain, will be the critical challenge to be dealt with by the primary stakeholders in this sector.