Why set up SchoolNets?

CHAPTER 2
2. Why set up SchoolNets?

Rapid developments in ICT are bringing about significant economic and social changes. In this rapidly changing situation, schools must evolve accordingly and provide students with the skills they will require in this context. Schools must not only enable students to learn how to operate modern forms of ICT, they must also provide students with the opportunity to develop the information management and ICT-literacy skills required for effective participation in the emerging knowledge societies.

In terms of harnessing the advantages of ICT, setting up SchoolNets can be beneficial in a number of ways, as outlined below.

First, a SchoolNet provides a shared vision of utilization of ICT in education, which can be localized as appropriate. A SchoolNet can also facilitate system-wide changes, on a broader scale than the mandate of any individual government department or agency.

Second, a SchoolNet can facilitate the uptake of new technologies by schools by being a means of mobilizing the telecommunications and information technology sectors to reduce prices and offer free or discounted Internet connections for schools. Such initiatives can also help address the digital divide.

Third, a SchoolNet is a recognisable national or regional focus for co-operation among educators and this co-operation can be a means of overcoming obstacles faced by individual schools, such as high connectivity costs. A SchoolNet also facilitates the formation of partnerships between teachers, students and communities that otherwise would not have the tools, time or money to collaborate.

Fourth, a SchoolNet also provides an opportunity for the sharing of information, best practices and of teaching resources between teachers. Furthermore, the establishment of a SchoolNet is a means by which to foster the creation of locally-relevant educational resources.

Fifth, a SchoolNet supports e-learning in online environments, champions lifelong learning, and helps to prepare learners with the skills and abilities required for knowledge-based societies.

Finally, SchoolNets tend to utilize and promote modern pedagogy, including blended learning (a combination of conventional classroom practices with e-learning) and a learner-centred approach.