

ICT in Education in the Seychelles

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Source: *World Fact Book*¹

Please note:

This short *Country Report*, a result of a larger *infoDev*-supported *Survey of ICT in Education in Africa*, provides a general overview of current activities and issues related to ICT use in education in the country. The data presented here should be regarded as illustrative rather than exhaustive. ICT use in education is at a particularly dynamic stage in Africa; new developments and announcements happening on a daily basis somewhere on the continent. Therefore, these reports should be seen as “snapshots” that were current at the time they were taken; it is expected that certain facts and figures presented may become dated very quickly.

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Overview

Seychelles is considered as one of the richest countries in Africa by income per capita. The government has made some strides in the promotion of ICTs as a learning subject as part of the national curriculum. According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the country has a national ICT policy, although it does not as yet have a specific policy on ICTs in education. A limited number ICT projects have been attempted in the education sector to date.

Introduction

Seychelles comprises 115 islands and islets scattered over the Indian Ocean, 75 of which are uninhabited and volcanic. It has the smallest population of any sovereign state in Africa with 88% being accommodated in Mahé, the largest island. The main economic activities are tourism and marine fishing, along with some agriculture and small-scale manufacturing. Tourism employs 30% of the workforce and provides more than 70% of hard currency earnings. Seychelles is also member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Indian Ocean Commission and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern African States (COMESA).²

In 2004 Seychelles was ranked by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) as a high-income country at 47th out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index. However it is also per capita, the most highly indebted country in the world with a total public debt of 122.8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The debt burden is a function of an over-valued exchange rate that has caused the country to borrow extensively both domestically and from multilateral institutions.³

Table 1 provides some selected socio-economic indicators for Seychelles.

Table 1: Socio-economic Indicators: Seychelles

Indicator	
Population	84,494 (2005)
Languages	Official language: English. National language: Creole.
2005 Economic activity (% of GDP)	Agriculture: 2.7% Industry: 28.0% Services: 69.4%
Human Development Index	47 (out of 177 countries)
Per capita Gross National Income (US dollars)	2000: \$7,300 (2002); \$8,170 (2004) \$8,290 (2005)

The Education System

After completing six years of primary school and three years of secondary school, students who wish to continue, needed to attend a National Youth Service (NYS) programme in order to pursue further studies. This two-year programme has historically been the source of much controversy because it was perceived as being of inferior quality and it did not allow learners to live with their parents.. The duration of the NYS programme was later changed to one year, and in 1993 attendance in the programme was no longer a requirement for further education such as at the Seychelles Polytechnic. Because of the absence of higher education institutions in the country, higher education can only be pursued abroad, as there are no opportunities in Seychelles.⁴

Table 2 provides a quantitative perspective of some selected system indicators.⁵

Table 2: Selected Education Data

Indicator	
Enrolment in primary education (% gross)*	110 (2004)
Enrolment in secondary education (% gross)*	102 (2004)
Transition to secondary	95 (2003)
Gender Parity Index (GPI)**	1.00 in primary; 1.08 in secondary (2004)

*Percent of gross is the number enrolled as a percentage of the number in the eligible age group.

**GPI = gross enrolment ratio (GER) of females, divided by the GER of males and indicates the level of access by females to education compared with males. In Seychelles, the GPI suggests that there is gender parity in primary and secondary schools.

Infrastructure

An e-readiness assessment of southern African countries conducted by SADC in 2002 rates Seychelles as having among the most developed infrastructure compared with other southern African countries. Seychelles also rates among the highest in terms of fixed-line density, mobile phone penetration, electricity penetration, PC penetration, Internet access, and number of households with television and radio. However, despite having a good infrastructure, there are reportedly disparities in the use of distribution and use.⁶

Table 3 provides a snapshot of the state of national ICT infrastructure in Seychelles.⁷

Table 3: ICT in Seychelles

Indicator	
Fixed-line subscribers (2004)	70 per 1,000 persons
Mobile subscribers (2004)	49 per 1,000 persons
Dial-up subscribers (2004)	3.3 per 1,000 persons
Internet users (2004)	20 per 1,000 persons

Television broadcast stations (1997)	2
Radio stations (2001)	AM 1; FM 1

The linkage of Seychelles to the South Africa-Far East (SAFE) submarine cable which is a connection of over 13,800 km from Cape Town in South Africa to Malaysia, linking Mauritius, Reunion and India on the way, is still under discussion within the Seychellois government⁸.

ICT Policies

According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the Seychelles government has a national strategy on ICTs that is co-ordinated and implemented by the Ministry of Information Technology and Communication.⁹

Early in 2007, the Seychelles government was the last of the COMESA countries to receive financial and technical assistance to establish a national consultative ICT committee which comprises representatives of the public and private sectors¹⁰.

With reference to ICTs in education, in 2000 the government adopted Education for a Learning Society, which included the principle of introducing ICTs in schools and which affirms a commitment by the Ministry of Education to provide the widest possible access to information technology and harnessing its full potential for supporting and enhancing the learning process.¹¹ A national curriculum document also identifies ICT as a key learning area.

In 2005 the president of Seychelles announced that under a new secondary school curriculum that will be implemented as of January 2006, ICT will be introduced as an academic subject with the possibility of an International General Certificate in Secondary Education (IGSCE) in computer studies being introduced in 2007. The director for IT services in the Ministry of Education said that the programme will expose the children to ICTs at a very early age and help bridge the digital divide in the long term.¹²

In May 2007, the Seychelles president announced plans to popularize the use of ICTs in education through a subsidized scheme for teachers to gain access to laptops. Dell laptops will be provided to teachers at 25% of their market value and the proceeds from the sale of these laptops will be used to establish a fund for the continuity of the scheme¹³.

Current ICT Initiatives and Projects

Two of the known initiatives under way in Seychelles are: the Microsoft Partners in Learning and the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) projects..

Microsoft Partners in Learning

In 2005 Microsoft partnered with the Ministry of Education and Youth to train 166 master teacher trainers in its five-day training programme which involves basic ICT skills development and application to support learning and teaching. The agreement between Microsoft and the Ministry of Education also involved donation of software to schools.

VUSSC

The Ministry of Education in Seychelles hosted a meeting of Ministers of Education from small states to discuss establishing an initiative promoted by the Commonwealth of Learning known as the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) programme. The VUSSC is a network committed to the collaborative development of free content resources for education.¹⁴

Implementing ICT in Education: What Helps and What Hinders?

Table 4 provides a summary of the current stage of ICT development in Seychelles in terms of enabling or constraining features in the education system.

Table 4: Factors Influencing ICT Adoption

Factors	Enabling Features	Constraining Features
<i>Policy framework and implementation</i>	A national ICT strategy is in place and reference is made in the education policy to the promotion of ICT as a subject to be taught in schools.	The country does not have a specific policy on ICT for education.
<i>Advocacy leadership</i>	The former Minister of Education championed the promotion of ICTs in education. The President has made pronouncements which support the promotion of ICTs in education	Leadership has been limited to some representatives within government and to a lesser extent from civil society agencies. .
<i>Gender equity</i>		There are no explicit references to the promotion of women and girls or gender equality in any existing policy documents related to ICTs or ICTs in education
<i>Infrastructure and access</i>	Relative to other countries in Africa, Seychelles ICT infrastructure is strong.	

<i>Collaborating mechanisms</i>	A national consultative ICT committee has been established which include representatives from public and private sectors	There are limited known mechanisms for collaboration on ICTs in education in the country that also involves civil society agencies
<i>Human resource capacity</i>		Human resource capacity is limited, particularly in reference to ICTs in education and in view of the absence of higher education institutions in the country
<i>Fiscal resources</i>	A subsidised scheme to provide laptop access to teachers have been introduced in 2007	The country has no fiscal resources dedicated to ICTs in education.
<i>Learning content</i>	The government has introduced ICTs as a learning subject in schools.	

Notes

1 The World Factbook 2007. <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/se.html>

2 Seychelles country profile. UNESCO.

http://www.uneca.org/aisi/nici/country_profiles/Seychelles/seychab.htm

3 Wikipedia: Seychelles. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seychelles>

4 Seychelles Education. <http://www.country-studies.com/seychelles/education.html>

6 Chisholm L, and Dunpath, P.A. *The Use of ICTs in the Curriculum in Botswana, Namibia and Seychelles*. 2004. SADC Education Policy Support Initiative. HSRC, South Africa.

7 World Telecommunications Development Report. 2006. ITU.

⁸ Gervais, J Henrie (2007) : “Are We There Yet” in Highway Africa News Agency, 03/04/07
<http://hana.ru.ac.za/article.cfm?articleID=1347>

9 <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/nici/Seychelles/seychelles.htm>

¹⁰ Gervais, J Henrie (2007) : “Committee set up to advise government on ICT” in Highway Africa News Agency, 19/01/07. <http://hana.ru.ac.za/article.cfm?articleID=1260>

11 Paterson, A. “Conditions Necessary for the Successful Implementation of ICT in Seychelle Schools.” In *The Use of ICTs in the Curriculum in Botswana, Namibia and Seychelles*. 2004. SADC Education Policy Support Initiatives. HSRC, South Africa.

12 Seychelles plans new way ahead for ICT training.

<http://www.digitalopportunity.org/article/view/117884/1/>

¹³ Gervais, J Henrie (2007) :Laptop Computers at a Subsidised Price. In Highway Africa News Agency, 10/05/07. <http://hana.ru.ac.za/article.cfm?articleID=1383>

14 A Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth . COL.

<http://www.col.org/colweb/site/cache/bypass/pid/3109?print=1>

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