Information and Communication Technology and the development of statistics teaching in Benin: Advantages and inconvenient

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Summary

Some changes occur in world at the aegis of the 21st century like a revolution marked by the rapid and extraordinary expansion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). This kind of revolution, by its velocity of propagation has hugely contributed to the growth productivity. Then, internet and multimedia appear as essential tools to the socio-economic development of any modern nation.

In the current context of globalisation supervised by the developed countries with United States as pioneers it is greatly important to measure ICT's use, particularly in the education and training fields.

Then, the necessity to measure the use of internet resources in the specific field of statistics teaching according to the available means and technology appears as a basic need researchers, decision makers, students, etc. After that, some propositions should be give in order to improve the current situation.

First of all, it is suitable to describe briefly the Benin Republic. With a population 6.7 millions of people in 2003 according to the february General Census (4.2 millions in 1992, march General Rensus), Benin is an west Africa country with a geographic surface of 114,760 Km². The density of the population is 58.38 people on the Km². Benin is an agricultural developing country as agriculture represents 40% of the Gross Domestic Product and uses about 80% of the population.

Even if ICT appear soon in the years 70's, Africa got in contact with it in the 90's particularly concerning the internet and its resources. In sub-saharan Africa, Benin was one of the first countries to hear about and to practice the World Wide Web. It was in 1995 at the occasion of the international summit of the French language speaking countries held in Cotonou in December with an internet centre inaugurated at the Benin National University, the most important university of the country: it was the SYFED center. This Center, with documentation and some five personal computers connected to the World Wide Web, was opened to students in 3rd or 4th course, to teachers and researchers. But this proportion of users is less than 2% of the students and the accessibility costs were very expensive: FCFA 1,500 each month or FF 15/month for students and FCFA 7,500 each 3 months or FF 75 each 3 months for teachers and researchers.

Progressively, the national postal office has agreed some few Internet Service Providers (after the french speaking language summit in 1995). Since then, the internet environment of Benin is constituted of ISP and cyber cafés. The seconds depends on the firsts. Nowadays the great cities of the country, especially the economic capital of Cotonou are swarming cybers. The cybers are connected with the ISP (in fact, some of the ISP have their own cybers) that have direct connexion with internet.

Currently the navigation costs are cheaper. Then, from FF 15 or FF 30 by hour of connexion, the mean costs are today between FF 3 to FF 5.

Nowadays, internet resources are hugely taking part to any field of human life and particularly in education. In 1999, with the help of the partners in development and on the initiative High Education Ministry, a Distance learning Centre (CED) has been founded to provide training courses at a various public. This centre offers teaching by specialists all around the world in several fields from economics, technology to development subjects.

But unfortunately, nothing is really done to adapt appropriate curricula related to the availability of Information and Communication Technology resources in universities and schools.