

**Speech by David Siele, Director of Higher Education at the
Ministry of Education, Kenya, at the ONLINE EDUCA BERLIN
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Your Excellencies

Honourable Ministers

Members of the Diplomatic Community

Government Representatives and Representatives of Non-Governmental
Organisations

Representatives of International Development Agencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour and privilege for me to be invited to address the “**Online Educa**” eLearning Conference. The Government of Kenya, and particularly the Ministry of Education, are pleased to be part of this historic event.

As we begin our deliberations, I would like to thank the German government and the organizers of this event, ICWE, for taking the challenge to bring us together here, from Africa, Europe and beyond.

I have been informed that this is a forum of stakeholders engaged in planning and implementing technology-supported learning and training throughout the world. “Online Educa” is not only Europe’s largest international annual eLearning conference but by extension can be considered the world’s largest gathering of its kind. For this reason, it offers an ideal venue to learn and network with the world’s best in the field of e-learning.

Let me now give you some insights into what is currently being done by my government in Kenya.

In Kenya, the Ministry of Education has adopted ICT broadly in three ways: ICT as an administrative tool also known as eGovernment, ICT for teaching and learning also known as eLearning, and ICT for education management also known as Education Management Information System or EMIS.

In pursuing eGovernance in education, our primary focus is on mainstreaming ICT in all educational operations and service delivery for regional and global competitiveness. eLearning aims at mainstreaming ICTs in the teaching and learning process to ensure the integration of ICT in teaching and learning. The EMIS focuses on providing education managers and administrators with accurate and timely data for better and informed decision-making.

In Kenya, the Government has put in place policies geared towards the use of ICTs in Education for teaching and learning. In 2005 we published a national education policy in which ICT in Education was given prominence. To implement this policy, the Ministry in collaboration with its partners developed a five-year programme for the entire sector, which defines investment programmes and provisional budgets to support various education and training programmes.

With the recent finalisation of the National ICT Policy for the country, my Ministry in consultation with all stakeholders has been able to develop a comprehensive **National ICT Strategy for Education and Training**, which is currently guiding the speedy implementation of ICT initiatives in the education sector.

The approach and vision outlined in our strategy will go to waste if vast numbers of schools continue to be marginalized in terms of access to and use of ICT. To this end, my Ministry has setup a Ministerial ICT Committee to coordinate and

monitor the implementation of the various innovative solutions for education and training.

To start the process of increasing ICT access in Kenyan schools, my Ministry recently funded the acquisition of ICT equipment for 142 secondary schools. The Ministry intends to continue releasing funds to support schools in groups until all 4,000 secondary schools are e-enabled. The Ministry, in collaboration with the public and private sectors, has formed the Kenya ICT Trust Fund, whose main mandate is to mobilize corporate contributions for furthering ICT for Education initiatives. Through its partners, the Trust has been able to equip more than 800 secondary schools with ICT equipment, training, and software.

The Kenyan government has also equipped the Kenya Institute of Education with the initial capacity to digitize the national curriculum, starting with the secondary schools curriculum. We as a country have realized that the only way to have a truly inclusive education system, including reaching the out-of-school and other sectors such as non-formal education, is to embrace innovative use of ICTs.

The Government gives development of our own and localized digital content the highest priority in our efforts to move towards a knowledge-based society. Other initiatives to promote computer literacy include training of government employees in basic computer skills through the e-governance programme.

We are aware that we cannot go far if basic infrastructure such as electricity, telephone, and Internet connectivity is not in place. The government is encouraging the telecommunication sector to address infrastructural imbalance through the Universal Service Fund (USF) under the national regulator, the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two things can hinder the growth of ICT and by extension the take up of e-learning: These are a lack of political commitment and poor ICT strategies that are not aligned to development agenda of the country. My presence here today is indeed an indication that political goodwill is there in Kenya. Our president has made the inclusion of ICT in all the sectors a national priority.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen. Latest estimates indicate that Kenya has Internet penetration of 4.4%, more than 1000 cyber cafes, computer penetration of 2%, television penetration of 60%, radio penetration of 90%, and mobile phone penetration of 16%. Unfortunately, these statistics indicate that Kenya is lagging behind many countries in these technological indicators, and I am aware that many countries represented here today are far ahead of what we have been able to do in Kenya.

To help mitigate this situation, I would like to take this opportunity to call on all of us gathered here today to forge North–South and East-West partnerships that will initiate and promote the of sharing of best practices and success stories, with less time spent re-inventing the wheel.

As I said earlier, our government has put in place policies towards enabling the growth of the ICT usage and knowledge in the country. We need to learn from others how they have succeeded. Perhaps we need to consider new regulatory frameworks for a converged communications and multimedia sector.

Since education is more concerned with content delivery, new ways of thinking need to go into our regulatory frameworks in order to facilitate the growth of education content providers.

Perhaps one of the things we need to debate in this forum is whether the education sector should be involved in the provision of network services, application services, network facilities, or content.

My view is that we in education would be better off focusing on content provision without being entangled with infrastructural technologies. Our recommendations should encourage vendor- and technology-independent solutions that offer sustainability in terms of deployment in our countries and that are easily manageable by teachers and educators in the field, particularly those in the rural settings.

I hope your deliberations in this important conference will yield great friendships and networked institutions for continued collaboration.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen. In closing, I would like express my hope that your discussions during this historic conference here in Berlin are fruitful. I also wish each of you personally the best of health and success. We look forward to seeing all of you in Nairobi next year.
“Karibu Kenya 2007”

Asanteni Sana

Thank you.