

» E-LEARNING

Ghana offers e-learning lessons to Kenya

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E-learning in Kenya will remain elusive if the basics of training and infrastructure aren't first tackled, according to an assistant minister from Ghana, which is seen as a model of e-learning success in Africa.

At a meeting on e-learning—a computer-assisted, online mode of study—Ghana's assistant education minister, Kwame Amporfo, highlighted how the country has partnered with the private sector and international organisations to make e-learning a reality.

E-learning involves computer learning, via lessons and instruction over the public Internet, private distance learning networks or in-house

via an Intranet. Local efforts to make e-learning a reality have mainly focused on higher learning institutions such as universities.

Tertiary learning institutions, secondary and primary schools still grapple with many challenges such as a lack of computers, software and skills to use them in most areas. Power supply is even inconsistent or non-existent in many rural schools.

In Ghana, after a 2003 ICT policy highlighted education as a critical pillar and social enabler in the country, in 2006 the Ministry of Education developed a specific ICT education policy that aimed to streamline and standardise the use of information technologies in schools countrywide,

Mr Amporfo said. Kenya does not yet have a national policy framework in e-learning, Ghana partnered with major software company Microsoft, which runs an e-learning programme that trains teachers on the technology. The company has established academies in 14 higher learning institutions in Ghana. The West African country has provided personal computers under a hire purchase programme for schools, teachers and civil servants. It also collaborates with donors on teacher training and PC donations to schools.

Under a bilateral deal with the Netherlands worth €45 million, the country offers ICT courses at all 38 teacher training colleges. The assistant minister also stressed the importance

of infrastructure. Ghana established a national communication backbone that makes high speed communications services available to most of the country.

The energy ministry also collaborates with a project offering solar panels to rural communities.

At last week's e-learning conference, number of speakers from Kenya and abroad spoke about the adoption of e-learning, and suggested steps that could ease the shift.

Many spoke on the importance of embracing the technology, which could eliminate barriers to education in Africa. E-learning could remove the need to spend long periods travelling to schools.