



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**PRESS RELEASE BY HON MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
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Minister for Education**



2nd International Conference on ICT for Development,
Education and Training, The Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya
May 28 - 30, 2007

An Annual Event for Building eLearning Capacities in Africa



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2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING – E-LEARNING AFRICA

This year Kenya is set to host the **2nd International Conference on ICT for Development, Education and Training**, popularly known as e-Learning Africa to be held between 28th-30th May at the Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi. The theme of the 2007 conference is *“Building Infrastructures and Capacities to Reach out to the Whole of Africa”*.

One component of the conference is the **1st African High level Policy Maker and Industry Leader Round Table and Retreat** entitled “*Accelerating the Building of ICT Infrastructure and capacities for African Educational Systems*”. The one-day event is for high-level policy makers on ICT-enhanced education in Africa. The forum provides an excellent platform for the invited guests to dialogue and create a lasting network for sharing.

Kenya as a host country will benefit from this landmark e-learning assembly in that it will give our ICT professionals an opportunity to engage in discourse with others to share ideas and experiences on ICT and e-learning which is rapidly gaining currency and rapidly supplementing traditional methods of curriculum delivery, particularly in the middle level institutions and universities. We anticipate valuable lessons about integrating the e-learning with the conventional modes of teaching and learning. This is therefore, a golden opportunity for all levels of institutions to take stock and showcase how the e-mode has been utilized or can be used to enhance access to education and training.

E-learning is critical in that it can provide teachers and learners with improved learning opportunities through a variety of ways including:

- Enabling online teamwork for increased participation, collaboration and information sharing through the use of email, the Web and other remote collaboration tools.
- Enabling the rapid creation and inexpensive distribution of educational reference materials and knowledge within and outside national boundaries.
- Allowing each student to learn at his/her pace and speed thereby giving him/her greater control over their own learning process.

I would like to mention that the e-learning developments and initiatives are now in our institutions at different levels. We have put in place policies geared towards support to ICTs in schools. The policy is articulated in the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005, as a policy blueprint which led to the launch of the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) in July 2005. In this document, we have laid out clearly our goals and have made budget lines to support e-learning. We have also created partnership with other stakeholders in order to speed up and enhance the use of ICT in education. These include NEPAD, Microsoft, ICT Trust, Communication Commission Kenya(CCK), other ministries Multichoice et cetera.

Hinged on this policy document, we have made significant strides in providing primary and secondary schools with needed hardware and software as well as providing training for our teachers in computer skills. In all these efforts we focus integrating the ICTs into teaching and learning.

E-Learning Status in Kenyan Universities

At the University of Nairobi, our oldest university, for instance, a well tested e-learning platform - [Wedusoft](#) is in use to provide e-learning courses within and off campus has

been set up. We also have other software products that support the e-content development and automatin process. Other environments that are available include TUSK (Tufts University Sciences Knowledgebase) which is available for staff.

In the same university, many of the staff who have been trained on e-learning have now embarked on e-content development projects and to-date over 62 complete electronic courses are on interactive learning CDs, some of which have been made available on custom-developed e-learning platform. Students now use the Interactive CDs to supplement study materials, beside being able to have independent learning on their own at home and their places of work. This is a flexible and convenient way of studying without limitations of pace, time and space.

At Moi University established in 1984, implementation of an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) initiative to support Government efforts in expanding access to university education is ongoing. The university has set up the necessary ICT infrastructure in its satellite campuses in different parts of the country that will operationalize ODL. In addition, the university is an active member of Kenya Education Network (KENET) whose mission is to improve connectivity among the institutions of higher learning in Kenya. Further as indicated in its Ten-Year Strategic Plan, the University is scheduled to start Open and Distance Learning Programmes during the 2007/2008 Financial Year and all arrangements for implementation are on course.

In the Lakeside city of Kisumu, Maseno University has assembled requisite ICT infrastructure worth Ksh 14 million in readiness for e-learning programmes particularly video conferencing equipment. The university is now in take-off stage of adoption of e-learning programmes. In order o to offer access to university education to a larger number of students who qualify but fail to join public universities through Joint Admissions Board (JAB), Maseno University has identified (9) nine Learning Centres countrywide, which can be used as pilot centres for the Open, Distance and Electronic Learning (ODEL) programmes. Secondary schools and tertiary institutions under the NEPAD e-school initiative are also potential areas Maseno is looking forward to include in her initiative.

At Egerton University near Nakuru, the university plans to launch an e-learning programme in Nursing at its Nakuru Town Campus during the 2007/2008 academic year. The university fully understands that learners play a major role in constructing their own knowledge and developing their skills and hence to enhance their learning base.

Kenyatta University has been offering Open Learning and School-Based programmes since 2002. The University currently has eight Open Learning Centers countrywide, namely; Parklands Campus, Mombasa, Nakuru, Kakamega, Kisumu, Garissa, Embu and Nyeri. The programmes range from diploma to postgraduate levels hence the University has been receiving overwhelming students enrolments in the Open programmes. The university posts the reading materials to Open Learning students in form of module booklets and CDs. The University has also been availing some materials through its e-Blackboard Learning Management System(BLMS).

In order to reach out to the non-residential students, Kenyatta University launched the e-Learning mode of teaching in 2005. Selected lecturers have been trained on how to write and upload the teaching materials on the e-Blackboard Learning Management System (BLMS). At the same time, some of the students have been sensitized on how to interact through the e-platforms. The content posted on the on the BLMS is only accessible to the staff and students who are issued with passwords. Since inception, some students in Open Learning and regular programmes have partially been interacting through the (BLMS) from any point of internet access. Some of the University's Open Learning Centres are connected to the Internet for this purpose.

E-learning programmes have also be in operation at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology with the establishment of The School of Learning in 2006. Among the objectives of the School is to improve the quality education offered by the university and increase the access to education by students who wish to join university courses. Initial sensitization of administration and staff was conducted before inception in 2004 while further training of technical staff was conducted in 2005 with the assistance of the Commonwealth of Learning.

In middle level colleges, e-learning programmes are on-going at Kenya College of Communications Technology (KCCT). The college has been on e-learning mode of delivery in some courses since 2001 when it opened its first e-Learning Centre at the City Centre Campus at, Telposta Towers and later in the year at Mbagathi Campus. The College is currently in the process of hosting its own e-learning platform to launch its unique telecommunication engineering courses online. In addition, KCCT is setting up an online Testing Centre, and introducing a variety of IT certifications so as to make it a one-stop ICT training and certification centre.

It is important to note that, in order to develop a highly skilled and educated workforce with the right aptitudes and skills we must pay full attention to ICT. Use of ICTs is one of the strongest energizers and needs to be used in all sectors both as a tool and source of Knowledge.

Finally, I am gratified to note that e-learning activities are alive in several Kenyan institutions, such as Strathmore University, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, USIU, Kenyatta University, Kenya Polytechnic and Kenya College of Communication Technology. Lessons from this conference will no doubt bring us closer to the dream of a strong and vibrant nation empowered by education that is technologically -driven.

I assure all that with continued emphasis on partnerships with key players in the use of technologies and investment in e-learning, our education should see real changes for the greater benefit to our people.

Hon (Prof) George Saitoti, EGH, MP
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