

# Education ministry to promote e-Learning

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10 Dec 2007

Uganda's ministry of education and sports is to promote the use of information and communication technologies in all schools to enhance the quality of teaching.

"We are implementing a number of projects aimed at promoting the use of information communication technology (ICT) in all schools," says the ministry's assistant commissioner for secondary education, Nsumba Lyazi.

## Cyber schooling and digital libraries

One of the initiatives includes the establishment of a US\$2.5 million digital library for Makerere University that is to be opened soon. Other initiatives include the cyber school technology solution aimed at improving science teaching in secondary schools with the first phase to cover one hundred schools.

The ministry is also planning to establish a computing and information science centre at Makerere University that is to be equipped with 6,000 computers and the introduction of a computer science degree at Busitema University.

"All these seek to ensure that over the next decade all schools and institutions will be connected to the Internet, have teachers trained to impart ICT skills to students and use them as a pedagogical tool," he told a one day workshop in Kampala.

"We also want to have a digitized curricular and resource centres and to have access to digitized teaching and learning materials," he said in a paper he presented on the theme 'An overview of ICT in the ministry of education and sports'.

## Increase of ICT learners

He said that currently the number of students taking ICT courses have increased since the year 2002.

In the year 2002 there were 186 students and increased to 654 in 2003, to 1,120 in 2004, to 1,755 in 2005 and in 2006 there were 2,390.

"We are in the process of finalizing Advanced level computer syllabus - we have almost completed a refurbishment centre for old computers to be located at Kyambogo college school where students will learn and maintain computers," he said.

## Challenges for e-learning

He however said that there are still many challenges in the implementation of the e-Learning strategy.

"There is limited ICT infrastructure in schools, lack or unreliable internet services, frequent power cuts, lack of electricity in the rural areas, high capital cost for setting up an ICT centre and high recurrent costs for electricity, internet connectivity," he said.

Other limitations include outdated or inadequate relevant teaching software at all levels in the sector, inadequate number of teachers in ICT and lack of society's awareness of the role of ICT in education - particularly, how ICT can enhance the teaching-learning process.

Community leaders are of the opinion that governments must provide schools with affordable and accessible computers both used and new, assist disadvantaged schools with computers and help the schools connect to the internet. So far only a few. He said few interventions in schools for the establishment of ICT facilities in the past have been made by local and national government and that needs to improve.

"However all these interventions have been limited to a few pieces of computers and in most cases the interventions have been limited to a few isolated schools. Under the Rural Communication Development Fund (RCDF), a programme run by the Uganda Communications Commission, we are providing eighty computers to eighty districts," he said.

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