



Republic of Ghana

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
DELIVERED BY HON. KWAME AMPORFO TWUMASI,
M. P. & DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE & SPORTS - GHANA
AT THE OPENING OF THE E-LEARNING AFRICA CONFERENCE HELD AT
SAFARI PARK HOTEL, NAIROBI, KENYA ON MAY 29, 2007

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Chair,
Your Excellencies,
Hon Ministers of Education,
Hon Ministers of State,
Hon members of Parliament
Distinguished Educationists & e-Learning practitioners
Distinguished Policy Makers
Distinguished Leaders in industry,
My learned friends
Friends of the Forth Estate of the Realm
Distinguished Invited guests
Ladies & Gentlemen
A P O,

I bring you warm felicitations from H. E. the President, Government and people of Ghana and more importantly from the Ghana Ministry of Education Science and Sports.

I wish to express gratitude to the organisers of this conference for the opportunity to deliver this short address and indeed share a few thoughts with you.

Governments all over and especially in Africa are making strenuous efforts to reform their educational systems in order to ensure that among other reasons the human resources development agenda does not end in developing misfits for society. The knowledge economy and information society has its own characteristics and demands and this requires that education is tied to the needs of society.

The Government of Ghana is committed to the transformation of the agro-based economy of Ghana into an information rich and knowledge-based economy and society using the tools of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This is being driven by the implementation of the ICT for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) Policy.

It follows therefore that the deployment of ICT into Education will result in the creation of new possibilities for learners and teachers to engage in new ways of information acquisition and analysis. For proper guidance as to issues relating to why we need to go, where we wish to go, and how to go, these have been addressed in the ICT in Education Policy which was developed by with support from the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI).

The Ghana government is therefore committed to a comprehensive programme of rapid deployment and utilization of ICT within the Education Sector to transform the education system and thereby improve the lives of our people.

It is our government's desire that through the effective deployment of ICT in Education, the culture and practice of traditional memory-based learning will be transformed to education that stimulates thinking and creativity necessary to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

In practical terms , the Ghana Ministry of Education, Science and Sports is implementing the Ghana e-Schools and Communities Initiative, a key strategic plan to roll-out ICTs in our educational institutions as a means to address some of the challenges in our educational system.

The Ghana e-Schools and Communities Initiative is an umbrella programme that stands on its own and also drives a number of other ICT in Education initiatives. Significant among the sub-initiatives is the NEPAD e-Schools Initiative of the African Union (AU); the implementation of which is being effected by the Ghana Government and co-ordinated by the e-Africa Commission for the NEPAD Secretariat.

By February 2007, the Demonstration Project of the NEPAD eSchools Initiative had been virtually completed in six secondary schools across the country by the two consortia working in the country, namely, ORACLE and CISCO.

The set-up in each school includes at least 25 computers, all wirelessly networked with approved educational content for Mathematics, Science, e-Health and Business Studies. Other equipment include printers, scanners, photocopiers and fax machines as well as DSTV with several educational programmes. The Computers have Satellite VSAT Internet Connectivity. Efforts are being made to get the support of other development partners in this crusade of ours for the roll out agenda. The Ministry of Education, Science and sports is initiating moves to provide ICT tools to about five hundred Senior High Schools across the country and fully equip our thirty-eight Teacher training Colleges under a bilateral cooperation with the Netherlands Government.

There is a Government Assisted PC Programme (GAPP) also referred to as the iADVANCE Project. It is a collaboration between Intel Corporation on one hand with the Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of Education, Science & Sports on the other to make computers affordable (sold on hire purchase) to teachers and other government employees as a flagship project that is to catapult all – young and old into the realms of the information society and knowledge economy.

There are also a series of training programmes being undertaken to build the capacity of teachers and office staff. Key among these are those under the Partners in Learning (PIL) programme of Microsoft.

Under a cooperative arrangement with Intel Corporation, the Ghana Ministry of Education, science & Sports is currently developing a portal (www.skool.gh) for the teaching and learning of Mathematics and Science for Junior High and Senior High Schools.

In all these initiatives, we seek to champion an orchestrated commitment to a development crusade through education as a key. Certainly education per se does not come from the hardware automatically but one's commitment to subjecting that tool to facilitate the management of information and knowledge.

I believe we are all aware of the fact that the learning styles of people, young and old, in our time has generally changed. We prefer knowledge and information that come to us through multiple modes than just text. How many of our children have the time to sit

behind their desk to read text in a book for two hours without getting bored? In the same vein, are we not witnesses to children that sit by the computer or watch video for between six to ten hours without asking for a meal? Is that not a firm justification for adapting our education delivery to the learning styles of our learners?

You and I know that while science and technology, industry, health facilities are changing at an amazing pace, the same cannot be said of our classroom. Technology has not affected the classrooms of many of our institutions.

Teachers therefore need to be able to transform their classrooms from places where a static one-way flow of information from teacher to student occurs, into a dynamic, student-centered learning environments in which learners interact with peers in teams doing collaborative learning, both in their own classroom as well as with virtual classes around the world through the internet or various networks. This is what I believe is the core and essence of integrating ICT in Education and therefore looking at e-learning as a significant strategy for improving access to education, quality as well as management efficiency in the education delivery enterprise.

CHALLENGES

For various considerations, the development of digital content with local or cultural orientation is one great need as we plan the deployment of e-learning facilities in our educational system. Unfortunately, many of the e-learning materials we find around do not have African flavour and sometimes make understanding of concepts difficult. For example: Making a statement like "because I walked in the snow for a long time I feel very cold" to typical rural child in Ghana would have no meaning as snow is not a common vocabulary in use. This is considered from the premise that there is no snow in Ghana. Other challenges may be listed as follows:

- Communication & Power Infrastructure
- Bandwidth Charges
- Dangers of the Internet

At this stage, let me take this singular honour of announcing the readiness of the Government of Ghana to host the next version of the e-Learning Africa Conference in May 2008. The next conference promises to be not only spectacular but promises to bring a

new wave of friendship and development in Africa, a taste of the proverbial Ghanaian hospitality and bring you next door to the venue where the finals of the African Cup of Nations would have been held in January/February 2008. I have reason to perceive that the next conference to be held in the Accra International Conference Centre in May 2008 will leave indelible memories of Ghana in your hearts and minds.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I wish all of you well in the deliberations during this conference and hope that this landmark event will make a significant impact in the education arena in Africa. We hope to see the bridging of the digital divide as an ultimate outcome of this and similar events in Africa. I also wish to call on all of us to ensure that there is effective networking across the African continent so that we can share our experiences and move on a track of total development. Thanks so much for the audience