

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DURING THE CLOSING CEREMONY
OF THE REGIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR CAPACITY
BUILDING AND ADVOCACY FOR THE FLOSS4EDU PROJECT AT
SAVORA PANAFRIC HOTEL IN NAIROBI, KENYA, ON 23RD NOVEMBER 2006.**

The Education Specialist e-Learning and
ICTA Commonwealth of Learning - Mr. Wayne Mackintosh;

Representatives from various countries in the
East Africa Region and the international community present here today;

The Ministry of Education Officers Present;

Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am happy to have been invited to close this very important workshop on capacity building and advocacy for the FLOSS4Educ Project.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is heralded the world over as the much needed impetus for the economic growth of a Nation. Kenya is indeed very proud to have been chosen to host this workshop on the FLOSS4Educ Project, an honor by the international representatives who have come to assist and advise on this African collaboration initiative.

In the effort to keep pace with the fast growing ICT in education in the 21st century, the Ministry of Education has made strides by putting in place Policies and Strategies to address this area. The Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 on Education, Training and Research, outlines the focus of the Ministry in embracing ICT in education; and the implementing document - Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) underscores the Ministry's commitment in working with Private and Public sector partners in integrating ICT in education. The ICT Strategy for Education and Training launched in June 2006, emphasizes capacity building for the Ministry of Education staff to equip them with relevant knowledge and skills leading to efficient management and delivery of quality education in the 21st century and beyond. It is anticipated that by the year 2010, the entire education staff and the teaching force will be equipped with relevant ICT skills for effective and efficient management of the sector. Towards this end, the Ministry has, within the past one year committed a substantial amount of money towards procurement of computers and accessories for the staff and 142 Secondary schools countrywide. The Ministry is also participating in the ongoing continental NEPAD e-Schools DEMO which has so far seen some of our public schools connected to the internet and serving as model schools for integration of ICT in teaching and learning.

Mr Chairman, the government is committed to provide ICT skills to the teaching force of 197,000 Primary school teachers and 38, 000 Secondary school teachers. The Ministry,

together with the Teachers' Service Commission has embarked on plans to provide ICT teachers to schools, whose responsibility will be to initiate capacity building at the school level to enhance ICT literacy skills. The computer teachers will be required to assist subject teachers adopt e-learning resources and develop digital lessons that can easily be accessed by their colleagues at school level and also share their expertise with neighboring institutions. However, the content developed will be expected to reflect local curriculum needs. In addition the Ministry of Education is keen on enhancing collaboration with Private and Public Partners in an effort to build capacity at Universities and Colleges so as to equip pre-service teachers with ICT skills and conduct more in-service training programs for teachers. It is imperative to take a major step in creating a critical mass of an ICT literate work force in readiness for incorporation of Open and Distance learning as an avenue for rapid expansion of higher education for all Kenyans.

Mr. Chairman, We also recognize that it is not enough to provide ICT infrastructure and build capacity of teachers without paying due attention to availability of relevant digital content. Digital content development is critical if we have to meet the challenges of the 21st century and the Millennium Development Goals. The Kenya Institute of Education is in the process of digitizing the curriculum as a strategy to enhance e-learning.

Ladies and Gentlemen, promotion of Open Source Software is being accepted world wide as a tool for providing software that matches the needs of users regardless of language differences. In Kenya the curriculum encourages the strengthening of the language base by conducting teaching in the lower level classes, starting from Early Childhood level up to standard 3 using mother tongue or the language of the catchments area. If a child is confident in mother tongue, this provides a strong foundation for learning other languages. Free and Open Source software provides enabling tools for content development that will cater for this cadre of learners and also address the language diversity in communities. Currently a number of our schools and community centres around the country have found Open source software to be a vital and convenient resource. Some of our higher institutions of learning, for example *Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology* and *Egerton University* have already adapted the use of Free and Open Source Software in various engineering courses to suit their special digital content needs.

Mr. Chairman, not all Educators are programmers, but they can learn much from the experience of the free software community globally. The freedoms associated with free software will provide useful guidelines for sustainable development of e-Learning. As providers of relevant and quality education to all Kenyans, it is envisaged that;

- The freedom to use Open Source education resources, will provide access to both teachers and administrators who may not have access to closed software that has cost implications;
- Free and Open Source software will provide users with additional freedom to adapt educational content that suits their various needs.
- In away, they will be empowered to adapt and modify content for specific areas in the curriculum and administrative management in institutions;
- Free and Open Source Software will enable users to develop and share content with their colleagues without restrictions, thus enhancing use of ICT in education

- Stakeholders will be able to modify open education resources for the improvement of the community, thus providing avenues for enhancement of Open and Distance Learning.

Ladies and gentlemen, I note with appreciation that the vision of the FLOSS4Edu project is "To make available by the year 2009 appropriate educational content and a set of easy-to-use FLOSS tools to 100 educational institutions while building the largest community of educational practitioners collaborating on the development of Free and Open Education Resources". The "Wiki Technology" of Free Learning and Open Source Software is therefore, a great promise for the collaborative work on content development for the benefit of the Kenyan learner and Africa as a whole. The freedom provided for content development that suits the needs of the user is a great motivation in integrating ICT in education.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Ministry of Education will continue to provide an environment that lays emphasis on the importance of free content and free software in education alongside proprietary software so as to meet the varied needs of users of education materials.

We acknowledge that the more free content that is developed by the education community, the more it will become necessary for us to design and develop, the supportive policy framework. The Ministry of Education is therefore, grateful to the Commonwealth of Learning for providing us with a free hosting service for the development of content. We shall strive to turn these opportunities into education realities.

Once again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to interact with all of you to day. On behalf of the Ministry of Education Kenya, I wish to say that we look forward to a stronger partnership in our efforts to provide Free and Open Source software resources to our learners, particularly the young people so as to make them responsive to the job market in the 21st century and beyond and also to be able to have access to higher education through Open and Distance Learning.

At this juncture Ladies and gentlemen,I declare the workshop officially closed.

Thank you and may God Bless you.