

Joint ICT project launched for education in Kenya

NAIROBI: Intel, Cisco, Microsoft, the government of Kenya and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) announced a joint partnership to improve education in Kenya. Launched in collaboration with Kenya's Ministry of Education, the Accelerating 21st Century Education (ACE) project aims to improve the quality of primary and secondary education through the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT).

The parties are working together to develop a model for deploying ICT in education. Reflecting a combined commitment valued at more than Ksh700 million, ACE will create “one-to-one e-learning” classrooms in 60 focus schools across Kenya.

ACE plans to deploy about 6,000 networked computers for student and teacher use; train approximately 7,000 teachers to effectively integrate technology in the classroom; train technical support staff at each school to maintain the technology; deploy a wireless infrastructure within the schools; provide access to digital educational content; and develop the local ICT industry in Kenya to promote economic development and sustainability.

In addition, Cisco, Intel and Microsoft plan to work together to establish a School Technology Innovation Centre (STIC) in Nairobi — a model that has been promoted in other countries through the Microsoft Partners in Learning Program. The centre will be dedicated to research on innovative emerging technology solutions and serve as a repository and showcase for best-known methods of teaching, learning and educational technology.

“ACE ties in with our mission to increase access to education, improve the quality of education and raise school enrollment rates for children from marginalized areas of East Africa,” said USAID Kenya Mission director Erna Kerst. “We hope this collaboration will encourage more Kenyan children to complete school, improve teacher training practices and enhance professional development for teachers and school administrators with support from USAID.”

USAID works closely with the government of Kenya on educational programs aimed at ensuring that more Kenyan children enroll in school, stay in school and receive a high-quality education that equips them with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the 21st-century economy. These education programs support more than 400,000 children from the most marginalised communities — including those orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic — as well as systemic changes in teacher training colleges and key educational institutions.

Commitment to action

The ACE project focuses on 40 secondary schools and 20 primary schools across Kenya. It plans to deploy 6,000 student personal computers (PCs), 120 teacher laptops, 60 servers and the supporting wireless infrastructure to establish two e-learning classrooms at each school.

The project also plans to train 2,000 teachers at the schools, as well as 5,000 pre-service teachers at teacher training colleges in Kenya. In addition, ACE will offer education leadership forums to help lead teachers at the participating schools define a strategy for creating 21st-century learning environments. Training will be provided through the Intel Teach Program and the Microsoft Partners in Learning Program, which offer proven ways to integrate technology into the curriculum for enhanced classroom learning.

To promote a sustainable implementation of ICT in education, two instructors and one network administrator at each of the 60 schools will receive networking and IT training through the Cisco Networking Academy. The Networking Academy collaborates with educational institutions, governments and community-based organizations to provide students around the world with foundational ICT skills along with career skills such as problem solving, collaboration and critical thinking for increased access to career and economic opportunities.

“Collaboration among public and private-sector organisations can significantly enhance the quality of education for students around the world and strengthen the communities where they live,” said Tae Yoo, senior vice president, Corporate Affairs, Cisco. “By taking a holistic approach to education that includes the effective integration of ICT, the government of Kenya in cooperation with Cisco, Intel, Microsoft and USAID is taking a bold step forward to create a sustainable model of education reform and equip students with the skills they need to be successful in the 21st-century.”

ACE aims to align closely with the goals of Kenya's Ministry of Education, which recently digitised its national curriculum. The project will provide digital content to help deploy the revamped curriculum, with an initial focus on math and science subjects for primary grades 4-6 and for the first two years of secondary education. As part of this effort, Intel and the Ministry will collaborate on developing localised content for the Intel skool Learning and Teaching Technology, an interactive Internet resource for learning math and science. Microsoft is also working with the Ministry to develop a new education portal where teachers can access e-mail and online educational content.

“By mobilising our combined resources, we can help Kenya's Ministry of Education put the implementation of its National ICT Strategy for Education on the fast track,” said Robert Fogel, principal education architect at Intel. “We believe that public-private collaborations like the ACE project are the most powerful means to invest in 21st-century learning and at the same time can help to stimulate the local economy.”

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