



## **Opening Remarks**

**By**

**Prof. Mabel Imbuga, PhD, EBS**

**Vice Chancellor**

**Jomo Kenyatta University of**

**Agriculture and Technology**

**During**

**the Official Opening of JKUAT eLearning Sensitization Week**

**held at the New Science Complex**

**Tuesday April 19, 2011**

**Guest Speaker, Mr William G. Kimani of Octopus ICT solutions,  
Ladies and gentlemen**

Ladies and Gentlemen, invited guests, lecturers and students; Welcome to the week -long use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) for quality teaching and learning. The E-learning week has been organized by the eLearning Department and is fully sponsored by the University. It is my hope that you will enjoy every scheduled activity which includes talks from eLearning experts and practitioners, online resources and interactions on LMS and demonstrations of eLearning related products and projects. It is also a good time to meet with instruction technologists, lecturers, content and learning system developers.

As we all know, eLearning is simply the delivery of educational content via electronic media. eLearning covers a wide set of ICT technology-based applications and processes, including computer-based learning, Web-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration and networking. It includes the delivery of content via Internet, Intranet, Extranet, satellite broadcast, audio-video tape, interactive TV and CD-ROM. Nonetheless, the different terminology may all point to a similarly conceived educational experience.

All of these terms imply that the learner is at a distance from the tutor or instructor; that the learner uses some form of technology (usually a computer) to access the learning material, and that the learner uses technology to interact with the tutor or instructor and other learners, and that some form of support is provided to learners. E-learning is therefore a powerful tool that frees teachers and students from the confines of the classroom. It can also be applied to in-service teacher training, communication among school administrators, contacts between the school and community, and myriad other uses we are still discovering.

The demand for quality education cannot be sustained using the traditional methods of face-to-face learning, as good as it may be. E-Learning is an innovative approach to educating a wider spectrum of the population; everywhere you look, individuals, small businesses, large organizations and the nation at large utilize technology to improve their performance, productivity and efficiency for a fast growing and advanced knowledge-based economy, eLearning becomes a strategic imperative for fulfilling and succeeding in national education vision and goals. Through this powerful tool, people in rural areas can remain in their communities and still access world-class education. If properly harnessed, eLearning could be

the fuel that propels the Kenyan economy to new heights in the years to come. There is no question that Kenya and Africa at large with its great numbers of people spread over vast areas, is in need of eLearning. But is there sufficient demand for this type of learning in the region?

Other universities in the region have already embraced eLearning and similar technologies for teaching and learning are committed to providing the best possible assistance to Kenyans with the ultimate aim of reducing poverty. Innovative technologies that develop the human resource base in the region are a key tool for lifting people out of poverty. This is why we are keen to learn the best practices in applying eLearning and to assist our teachers in taking full advantage of this new education and training process.

I wish to recognize the critical role that the eLearning Department has played in facilitating the organization of this Sensitization Week. The main objective is to raise awareness among academic staff and students on the resources the University has provided for eLearning implementation. In addition, I am told that the staff members will be taken through the feature of the existing Learning Management System (MOODLE) after each acquires/creates an

account on the MOODLE LMS. It is expected that by the end of this week, at least the course outlines of units for the coming semester will be accessible online. I urge you not to stop at just placing the course outlines on the system, go a step further and upload notes and activities for the students. It is my hope that CODs will mobilize all their teaching staff especially for the coming semester and direct them to the specified training computer labs to ensure that the objectives are achieved. There may be some issues to do with Intellectual Property Rights and compensation on digitized content but I have already appointed a committee (SODEL), which is looking into that.

It is common knowledge that eLearning flourishes on sound ICT infrastructure and any failure in our ICT delivery systems spells doom for the good initiatives. In this regard I wish to recognize the role played by the ICT directorate in providing infrastructure and technical support. Fears arising from implementation of eLearning at JKUAT have been expressed such as unreliable internet connection, inadequate facilities, policy issues, plagiarism, quality control and resistance from some cadres of academic staff. But while there is no one time solution to these challenges, I wish to state that the University is fully committed in this as evident from the resources committed to this course.

Recently, I appointed a committee of Open Learning, Distance Learning and eLearning in which one of its mandate is to come up with modalities of delivering Distance education through eLearning. I am aware the committee is finalizing its report which we are eager to implement. It is in this regard that I urge CODs to start sensitizing their staff to be ready for the paradigm shift. This will entail preparation of standardized and peer reviewed module manuals and subsequent digitization before the launch of the Distance Learning programmes through both eLearning and traditional modes.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, let me say that the ultimate reason why eLearning is important is that it is a tool to develop a national resource-namely an educated workforce. The future belongs to those nations that seize opportunities to strengthen the capabilities of their people to improve their lives. I hope participants in this workshop will share that vision.

Let me again, welcome everyone to the eLearning Sensitization Week and wish you all exciting and fruitful experiences. Thank you.

It is now my pleasure to declare the E-Learning week officially Launched.