Makerere University to introduce e-learning

By Saphira Nahabwe

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PIC: Prof. William Bazeyo addressing a workshop as Prof. Tonny Oyana (left) and Dr. Gity Behravan (centre) listen on at the main campus. (Credit: Mary Kansiime)

EDUCATION

KAMPALA - **Makerere University is planning to introduce e-learning as part of its strategy to increase the number of students yet at the same time decongest the university.**

E-learning involves the delivery of education via the internet.

Makerere will implement the new mode of learning under the new

revised information and communications technology (ICT) policy and master plan aimed at boosting research, innovation and online learning.

Dr Vincent Ssembatya, the university's director for guality assurance, said the new approach will help especially research students to cope with the new technology systems.

"The new approach will help improve research since many students will access all kinds of information using different gadgets. With e-learning, students can also study away from campus, which will increase enrolment without congesting the campus," he said.

Sembatya made the remarks at a multi-stakeholder workshop at the campus to review the university's policy on Tuesday.

The policy will be aligned with the ICT ministry and the National Information Technology Authority (NITA) standards.

Prof. Uno Fors from Stockholm University advised that the implementation look at key important components that can also be sustainable.

Access to improved gadgets, such as smart phones and computers for both students and staff, is key, he said.

"Most good research lecturers do not know how to teach using new technology. If you told them to record all lectures for students to access them afterwards, I am sure only a few can do it," Uno added.

Dr. David Turahi, director of IT at the ICT ministry, said Makerere University will go nowhere without adapting to e-learning, adding that it is a trend that "muct be embraced" because the campus "is crowded, yet more Ugandans need to attain higher education".

'Minimum training'

Prof. Paul Muyinda, the deputy principal of the College of Education and External Studies (CEES), called for a one-stop centre, where online and research material can be accessed by students and staff.

"Since it is costly to have a centralised database system, all students and teachers should have a minimum training or introduce a foundational course that will introduce them to the technology," he said.

Dr. Gity Behravan, a senior research advisor at the Embassy of Sweden, said they supported Makerere because of its role in development research in the region.

"We do not repeat what we have done before; that is why we are not supporting basic infrastructure," she explained.

Behravan advised that the policy should avoid certifying individual needs, but instead prioritise objectives and harmonise the context of research functions to easily help funders to support the implementation process.

Prof. William Bazeyo, the deputy vice chancellor in charge of finance and administration at Makerere, emphasised the need to

grow, work harder and forego the babysitting stage.

"The administration is committed to developing this ICT policy and contributing reasonably to its development," he said.

Bazeyo also disclosed that they were establishing the Research Development and Innovation Fund (RDIF) to aid scientific research, with a target of $10,000 (about sh36million) by the end of December this year.

The fund will be used to facilitate researchers other than waiting for funds from the Government.