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continual education for sustainable economic development

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ALIGNING VIRTUAL LEARNING TECHNOLOGY ENGAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – A CASE OF INSIDE CAMPUS

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Introduction

- Economic development in the context of education is the practice and philosophy of generating measurable economic returns in communities through the institutions of learning engagement in the provision of education and learning for sustainability.

- Evidence suggests that the diffusion of knowledge from engaged institutions of learning promotes economic recovery through the creation of innovative and highly adaptive environments. This can lead to the economic revitalization of communities as creative incubators, employers and local investors.

- A learning economy that focuses on new knowledge is essential to the overall economic strength of a country, and therefore institutions of learning can lead the way by supporting innovative venture capital projects, advancing applied research, and encouraging campuses and communities to build on existing assets.

Introduction Cont.

- Rapid development of computer networks and information technologies, especially the Internet and World Wide Web promotes electronic learning and distance education.

- Education programs delivery via virtual learning environments is a convenient form of education for learners who want to learn from home whenever they want.

- Virtual learning environments also provide unified information and knowledge sharing, enhances on campus pedagogic innovations and organizational change, removes the stigma associated with learning, removes the learning barriers related to infrastructure, cost effective and acts as a means of revenue generation.

Introduction Cont.

- This project therefore seeks to present "Inside Campus" as a practical and functional electronic learning system. This will promote sustainable economic development through knowledge and information sharing for the benefit of all particularly in view of the vision 2030.

- This will in turn improve the delivery of education programs to learners hence increase knowledge and skills acquisition essential for the overall economic development of a country.

Description/Overview

- Inside Campus is a Virtual Learning System that advances the public purpose of Colleges and Universities by deepening their ability to improve Community Life and educate students for economic and social responsibility.

- Inside Campus envisions Colleges, University and Organizations as vital agents and architects of a diverse democracy committed to educating students for responsible citizenship in ways that both depend on their education and improve the quality of community life.

- To achieve this objective, Inside Campus aims to provide a platform and environment that facilitates engaged learning in institutions and the community by providing resources and absolutely free courses.

Description/Overview Cont.

- Inside Campus will provide absolutely free courses and course materials to everyone, anywhere, anywhere at any time. These Courses will cover varied ranges of topics spanning Humanities, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Business, Management, Computer Science, Technology, Medicine, Biology, Physics, Chemistry and many others.

- Our Programmes will also be designed to help everyone, whether they are looking to improve their resume, advance their career or just learning more and expand their knowledge.

- Inside Campus will function as an effective online system which also involves hybrid methods/blended learning i.e. involving both method s of instruction including tradition face-to-face learning and virtual learning which is facilitated by our partner institutions to many of their on campus students who will use our platform.

Aims and Objectives

The main aims and objectives of this project are to:

- Enhance human capital development through education and training of students, staff and community members,

- Enhance knowledge transfer or the application of technology to promote external innovations,

- Facilitate systematic and intensive continuing education and training of the workforce in the society, and

- Create engaged learning economy that have the ability to foster positive civic and economic change.

Project Features

To facilitate the achievement of these objectives and in furtherance of the obligations of this project, it will make use of the following features;

a) Free courses and learning materials

Inside Campus will provide absolutely free courses and course materials to everyone, anywhere, anywhere at any time. These Courses will cover varied ranges of topics spanning Humanities, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Business, Management, Computer Science, Technology, Medicine, Biology, Physics, Chemistry and many others. Our Programmes will also be designed to help everyone, whether to improve their knowledge, or to learn new concepts.

Project Features Cont.

b) Virtual classrooms

Inside Campus will provide virtual classrooms where students, parents and facilitators and lecturers can meet and interact. These classrooms will provide students with free course materials, lectures (both in text, audio and video), interactive forums and discussion rooms, blogging, messaging/mailing services, assignments and homework. The site will also use peer assessment in evaluation

Project Features Cont.

c) Enhanced online library

Students, facilitators and collaborators will have access to our extremely resourceful online library that will enhance students' learning and programme facilitation .

Project Feature Cont.

d) Corporation and partnerships

Inside Campus aims to partner with both Institutions of learning and the community to promote research and development, knowledge transfer hence fostering economic development. Inside Campus will partner with universities, colleges, training institutions and Community organizations.

Project Feature Cont.

e) Volunteer Facilitation

- Other stakeholders can also volunteer to facilitate programmes in the site. They can volunteer as programme facilitators, professional consultants, advisers on technical aspects or as supporters.

Project feature Cont.

f) Programme support

- Inside Campus is an elaborate project that requires both financial, material and technical support. We therefore urge and welcome everyone to support our programmes in finances, with items such as computers, projectors, cameras etc to help us facilitate the programmes.

Project Feature cont.

g) Forums and discussion benches

- The site provides forum benches where visitors can share their ideas, exchange points and discuss touchy issues. Student can also use this feature to enhance their learning.

Project Feature cont.

g) Blogs and wikis

- The site also provides blogging features

h) Social networks

- Inside Campus will also have social networks such as facebook, twitter, rss feeds etc supported to facilitate collaboration.

Project Justification: Why Inside Campus?

- According to Benjamin, 1994, p. 49 "Every learner can, at his or her own choice of time and place, access a world of multimedia material ... immediately the learner is unlocked from the shackles of fixed and rigid schedules, from physical limitations ...and is released into an information world which reacts to his or her own pace of learning."

Project Justification cont.

- Based on this maxim, Inside campus therefore will assists learners and lecturers in several ways including the following;

a) Easy online delivery of materials; Inside Campus provides a 'shell' for a course programme allowing the learner and the lecturers to (i) publish existing documents and publications easily, (ii) link to online sources of data, news services, records and publications, (iii) link to online sources such as simulations and tutorials.

Project Justification Cont.

b) Also, inside campus is easy to use for both learners and lecturers.

c) Inside Campus will widen the students' access on and off campus to learning materials and resources; students should be able to access these materials anytime anywhere.

Project Justification Cont.

d) Inside Campus offers the potential of supporting a large group of students. Economies of scale can be gained, for instance by producing one set of online material that can be updated each year and assessing students online

e) Inside campus also offer flexible support for lecturers who do not need to be in a fixed time or place to support and communicate with students

Project Justification Cont.

f) Inside Campus also offer ways of learning and teaching such as collaborative projects involving students at a distance. It can also support active and independent learning where students are actively involved in studying ideas, solving problems and applying what they learn whilst taking a great responsibility for what they learn.

Project Challenges

Practical Learning and Curriculum Development

- It is important when embarking on VLE design not to work in isolation. The training should cover both the technological aspects of how to use the VLE and the pedagogical aspects of good practice in delivering online learning that is mapped to the curriculum learning objectives. This one of the greatest challenges that the design of Inside Campus has, it however intends to partner with professionals and the stakeholders to design curriculum that will enhance both their delivery and the learning objectives.

Project Challenges Cont.

<u>Technical Design and implementation Constraints</u>

- The design and implementation of an effective site involves several security threats, Inside campus is no exception. In furtherance of the goals of this project, Inside campus will seek technical advice and support in enhancing the security issues related to site development and administration. Also as a way to reduce the threats it might be exposed to, Inside campus will find the most reliable and secure hosting services. Inside campus will also source for technical support in design and implementation of this project.

Project Challenges Cont.

Financial Constraints

- The financial investment in a functional and reliable online learning platform is massive. There are several components that have to be included in the site that requires a lot of finances. This poses a great challenge to our urge of realize this dream of creating a learning economy. In this light, Inside Campus intends to collaborate with its supporters.

Conclusion

- There would be no better way to conclude this paper by returning to the words of Alisher Navoi, whose perspective on education was that "learning is knowledge acquired in small portions, as drops makes the rivers that flow to the oceans."

- Clearly the message from this paper and from Kenya as a whole is that investment in education is a critical part of a smart development strategy and it can help us to leap-frog into the modern economy and a sustainable future.

- Working together as educators, funders, policy-makers, humanitarians and communities across Kenya, we can accelerate sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Inside campus stands ready to partner with you on this journey.