The Future Direction of Virtual Universities: A Perspective from The African Virtual University

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1 Overview. *Who we are?*
2 Our presence. *Where we are?*
3 Our Activities. *What we do?*
4 Future Direction for Virtual Universities
A Pan African Intergovernmental organization

1997
AVU was created.

2003
AVU adopted Open Distance and eLearing.

2007-9
AVU was restructured redefining its focus through a Business Plan.

2010
AVU new Charter.

2012
AVU signed a MOU with African Union Commission
17 countries have signed AVU Charter

- Mandate-to increase access to quality higher education and training through use of ICTs
- Works Across Africa in English, French and Portuguese
- 30 African Countries
- Has trained more than 43,000 students since inception
- More than 53 Partner Institutions

Working Across Africa
Beyond Technological, Language and Cultural Barriers
Find more in www.avu.org
Our presence in Africa. Where we work?

OUR PRESENCE IN AFRICA

- Organization profile.

OFFICES – Africa

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Email: contact@avu.org
Our Presence in Africa

The African Virtual University: Our Presence in Africa

- Francophone sites
- Anglophone sites
- Lusophone sites
- Arabic sites
Context of Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

- Africa on a pedestal to become the next growth frontier
- However only 6% of school-leavers in Sub-Saharan Africa enter tertiary institutions.
- 12% to 15% workforce to attain tertiary education in order to sustain economic development
- Universities unable to increase physical infrastructure to meet the soaring demand.
- Current mode of delivery unable to meet either current or projected demand
- **Distance education could help meet demand**
- This requires appropriate policies and funding, meticulous planning and execution, innovation, quality control, research and development and a vast sensitization campaign.
Challenges for eLearning

- Limited internet connectivity
- High cost of connectivity
- Intermittent power disruptions
- Access to computer and other devices
- Lack of national and institutional policies
- Scarce experienced human resources
- Perception that distance education may not offer the same quality as face-to-face education
Opportunity for eLearning

- Fiber optics penetration
- Use alternative sources of power
- Emergence of mobile technology an asset

A recent report by Ambient Insight, a US-based research firm, revealed that in 2011 eLearning revenues in Africa reached $250.9 million and they are projected to increase to $512.7 million by 2016.
Our activities. *What we do?*

- AVU education & support services
- AVU eLearning model adapted to African context
- AVU eLearning Infrastructure adapted to low bandwidth
Focus on Education and Support Services

- Setup and upgrade a Learning / ODeL Centre
- Training of Trainers
- Updating and developing content
- Open Educational Resources (OER) Development
- Research & Development - Focus on educational technologies and mobile learning
- Developing Professional Networks (consortia, communities of practice)
- Gender mainstreaming
- Quality Assurance, Evaluation & Benchmarking
Universidade Pedagogica, Mozambique - 2009
Our Activities

Consortium Program Model (CPM)

OERs

OER@AVU
http://oer.avu.org
Expand access beyond consortium

VIRTUAL CONSORTIUM PROGRAM
- Policy & Curriculum Contextualization
- Capacity Enhancement
- Curriculum Design
- Content Development
- Content Production
- Content Review
- Quality Assurance
- Accreditation
- Program Delivery
- Research & Development
- Community of Practice

CONTENT PRODUCTION
- Online Format
- DVDs
- Print

PROGRAM DELIVERY
- Consortium Members’ Programs
- Joint Programs
- AVU Programs
- Degrees
- Diploma
- Certificates

SUPPORT TO DELIVERY
- e-learning Centers
- AVU Virtual Classroom
- Members’ Classroom
- Members’ Virtual Classroom
AVU Open Education Resources

- Full instructional path for programs – not only courses or learning objects
- 1.7 million users worldwide in 201 countries and territories
- Education-Portal.com People’s Choice Awards – 2 Awards for “Best OCW Emerging Initiative” in 2011 and “Most Progressive” in 2012
- AVU Atomic Physics textbook won the OCW Consortium Text Course Award for Excellence 2013
- AVU is sustaining member of OCW Consortium
AVU Open Education Resources

- Developed in 2005 through a collaborative approach
- 146 authors and peer reviewers from 12 Universities in 10 African Countries were involved
- OER@AVU portal: http://oer.avu.org/ and on Scribd: http://www.scribd.com/AfricanVirtualUni
- Available in English French and Portuguese
- 219 text books in Mathematics, Sciences, Teacher Education Professional Courses, and ICT Education freely available in English, French, and Portuguese
- Produced in several file formats on CDs/DVDs and print
AVU Multinational Project II (2012-2016)

- US$ 21 Million: 15.6 funded by African Development Bank and $ 5.4 Million from AVU & partners institutions
- 27 new or upgraded distance learning centers
- 27 universities from 21 countries
- Review of AVU 219 OERs modules
- New consortium Bachelor of Applied Computer Science and release it as OERs- Community of practice to continuously update the program
- Peace & Conflict resolution program
- Gender mainstreaming
- Research & Development
- Technical Assistance
Innovation in Educational Technologies through R&D

- Virtual Education Laboratory to be launch by end of 2013 or early 2014 in Nairobi Kenya
  - Mobile Learning Laboratory
  - Educational Technology and Learning Resources
  - Open Distance and eLearning Center

- Annual Conference
  - 1\textsuperscript{st} AVU International Conference November 20\textsuperscript{th} - 22\textsuperscript{nd} Nairobi Kenya [http://www.avu.org/1st-international-conference-of-the-avu.html](http://www.avu.org/1st-international-conference-of-the-avu.html)

- Online open journal to be launched in 2014
Future Projects

Full fledged University

- AVU strong in development services
- But program and course offers under developed
- Full fledged University to support the commendable efforts of country members
  - Participate to increase human
  - Contribute to regional integration, cross-border education and accreditation, employability, mobility of trainers and trainees, and sharing of resources
- Feasibility study in August July 2013
Massive Open Online Resources

- MOOC concept appealing and great potential

- Challenges: high bandwidth required for Hi definition videos; focusing on courses, not programs; completion rate < 10%; no formal accreditation

- Massive accredited education required to provide human capital in order to sustain economic development in Africa

  - Massive Open Online Programs (MOOPs), with low bandwidth platform, accreditation in all AVU countries members, high completion rate?

  - AVU is conducting feasibility study

  - Announcement on strategy soon
Our Activities

Consortium Program Model (CPM)

OERs

INSTITUTIONS
Africa & Beyond

Individual
Instructors

Self
Learners

Formal
Learning

Expand access beyond consortium

OER@AVU
http://oer.avu.org

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Adapt AVU OER content to a web-based format, full instruction-path, with peer interactions
Role Virtual University in Africa

- Provide leadership in emerging technologies and innovative practices through Research & Development
- Provide massive, relevant and affordable accredited education, and non formal education
- Provide attractive and flexible services
- Capitalize on Collaboration & Internationalization
Future Direction for Virtual Universities

World 2033

- Bright future for virtual universities
- They will be able to provide services around the world
- They must be hubs for innovation in educational technologies
- They may be forced to adopt new models in order to face competition
  - sharing of resources (open resources)
  - Sharing infrastructure to operate beyond borders, cultures and languages
- They may be inspired by airline alliances like Sky Team and Star Alliance
- AVU Consortium Program Model may be a futuristic
Thank You

www.avu.org
http://oer.avu.org

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facebook.com/AfricanVirtualUniversity

www.youtube.com/avuorg