ENHANCING EDUCATION THROUGH OPEN COURSEWARE

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Abstract

Education for all is a lofty target. The need for quality, affordable, accessible and transformational education is copious. The Open Courseware movement is providing necessary leverage and opportunities that a life time savings will not afford many all over the world. The rising aspiration for higher education with postulated at 160 million by 2025 presents the conventional classroom-based approaches to teaching and learning a huge challenge of not being capable of meeting the escalating demand for higher education in the knowledge society. This paper examines the opportunities, benefits and its challenges in the Open Courseware Movement to individuals and institutions of learning. The paper is a desk based research as it relied on the internet and relevant texts including books, journals and observable trends in the open courseware movement. The paper recommends that African schools should leverage on the vast knowledge provided by Open Courseware, that the drive to always re-invent the wheel should be replaced with a drive to improve upon available materials for education and that African institutions should not only be a consumer of foreign materials but provide open courseware for the world from her institutions.

Keywords: Open Courseware, Transformational education, Knowledge Society

Introduction

Education has being succinctly defined as the physical, social, mental and emotional development of the heart, hand and head. It is more than mere the perusal of a certain course of study (White, 2012). Education is about being educated not merely the delivery of knowledge, skills and information from teachers to students. The importance of transformation engendered by education cuts across every facet of the human existence (Berg, 2012). Hence any attempt that will further the course of quality education should be a welcomed idea.

According to the Global Network for Open Education, Open Courseware (OCW) is a free and open digital publication of high quality college and university level educational materials and these materials are usually organized as courses. They are free and openly licensed, accessible to anyone, anytime via the internet.

There is an emerging universal aspiration for access to higher education. This is not unassociated with the importance of education in engendering development and curbing vices. The global student population has being projected to reach 160 million by 2025 (Taylor, 2007). This present fact presents conventional classroom-based approaches to teaching and learning a huge challenge of not being capable of meeting the escalating demand for higher education in the knowledge society. Open courseware creates a universe that can enable more people to have access to education from all over the world and from the ivory institutions.

Brief History of Open Courseware (OCW)

Open Courseware is a relatively recent addition to educational experience. The OCW movement however only took off when MIT launched its OpenCourseWare at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Open Learning Initiative at Carnegie Mellon University in October 2002. The movement was later reinforced by the launch of similar projects at Yale, Utah State University, the University of Michigan, and the University of California Berkeley.

In 2005 the Open Courseware moved beyond MIT with the OCW consortium (Abelsen, 2008).

The reasoning behind OCW was to "enhance human learning worldwide by the availability of a web of knowledge" according to MIT. MIT also stated that it would allow students (including does outside MIT) to become better prepared for classes so that they may be more engaged during a class. A number of universities have created OCW since then (Winn, 2010).