

UbuntuNet CONNECT 2018

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Reducing Costs of Running Universities with Open Source Software

The biggest challenge faced by African universities is the lack of adequate financing. The largest chunk of the budget goes to Software costs. The use of expensive proprietary software is prevalent in most universities. This has mainly been due to the general misconceptions associated with the use of open source software. Education delivery in Africa can only be enhanced by implementing and appreciating various open source technologies. Africa's position on educational technologies, should not be governed or lead by first world countries that have no need for open source because of their vast wealth or already invested greatly in particular commercial software. Open source software provides the unique advantage of being able to modified to cater for the exact needs of a particular institution, thus removing all redundant and useless components. This is because open source is uniquely more flexible and less costly in comparison to commercial counterparts. Open source software is also designed to run on bare bones hardware requirement thus meeting most African universities hardware specification sheet as they often rely on low budget and energy efficient computer systems or those from foreign donor organisations. These hardware limitations make modern African higher learning institutions the perfect fit for open source solutions. In our research we systematically review the open source software that can be used by universities to enhance their service delivery as well as reduce overhead. We categorize the software according to different university functionalities such as; managing the students academic life, assessments, quizzes, assignments and writing test; viewing gradebooks, discussion forums, group activities, publishing results and even student evaluation of courses and facilitators. Our tabulated results provide a wide choice of software that will be of use to many institutions in Higher Education.

Key words: Open Source, Lower University Costs, University IT Strategy, Higher Education

Summary

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Sub-Theme

SMART Governance: Services and tools

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