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SMART TEACHING - THE CASE OF REMOTE TEACHING PROJECT BY KENET

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Abstract

Kenya Education Network (KENET) is the National Research and Education Network in Kenya whose mission is to transform education and research using ICT. In an effort to promote collaboration and the use of technology in teaching, KENET has setup a web conference platform based on the Open Source BigBlueButton. The service is available to all connected members as a free bundled connectivity service.

KENET has partnered with three (3) universities in Kenya for a remote teaching pilot project. The main objective of the project was to cut down on costs of teaching multiple campuses due to the increase in number of satellite campuses opened by universities. KENET has setup remote teaching classrooms at each of the campuses of the participating Universities. The classrooms are equipped with display units, sound system, personal computers and video capture devices. Additional accessories such as podiums and white boards have been incorporated in the classroom setup.

KENET build a custom web front-end to BigBlueButton that allows users to manage meetings and institutions to manage their own users. By using this front-end, a lecturer is able to create a web meeting room, modify a meeting, upload presentations and invite participants through email. The invited participants can be from multiple classes at different geographical locations. The learners can equally interact with the lecturer remotely. A lecturer can share audio, video, presentations, assignments as well as their desktop (display) with meeting participants. There is also an option of recording a meeting. A recorded session can be shared to the learners by the lecturer to ensure that the learners can revisit the lecture at their own convenient time; this fosters individualized learning. To manage an online classroom efficiently, the platform has a list of activities such as chatroom and uptime discussions to enable learners seek clarifications or raise questions. All these can be done in a decent/systematic manner as the moderator has the powers to 'kick out' some students out of session due to discipline issues.

From this pilot project, we can conclude that it is possible to use inexpensive technology as a way of enhancing learning in a blended way. It was noted that lecturers appreciated the time saving as they did not have to

shuttle between campuses to teach a course and the university equally saved on travel costs.

Keywords—KENET, Remote teaching, BigBlueButton, Moderator, Learner, Lecturer, meeting, Session

Summary

KENET has partnered with three (3) universities in Kenya for a remote teaching pilot project. The main objective of the project was to cut down on costs of teaching multiple campuses due to the increase in number of satellite campuses opened by universities. KENET has setup remote teaching classrooms at each of the campuses of the participating Universities

Sub-Theme

SMART Teaching and Learning: Services and tools

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