

A MOBILE APPLICATION (I-MASOMO) FOR ENHANCING INFORMATION ACCESS FOR UNIVERSITY COURSE SELECTION IN KENYA (2014 eLearning Innovations Conference and Expo-Kenya)

Track 1: Mobile Learning: There's an App for That!

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Abstract: The use of Mobile device in our everyday life has become inevitable due to their availability, affordability, portability and network coverage. In learning, mobile devices present a solution to a number of educational problems (West, 2013). Mobile phones, smart phones, tablets and Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) are all examples of mobile devices. This category of mobile devices may serve multiple purposes. Apart from the traditional use of sending and receiving voice communication, the devices may have advanced features such as internet access; take pictures, play music and some are even equipped with Global Positioning Services (GPS) functionality and many more. According to Jacobs (2013), while mobile technologies provides a way of accessing academic content effectively, students can extend learning beyond the classroom environs while collaborating and sharing with peers. Teachers can also guide students in active learning beyond the standard class times.

This paper is based on a mobile application developed at iLabAfrica as part of a Masters dissertation. The main objective of this research was to develop a mobile application and a web portal that would assist students, parents and guardians in decision making through access of relevant information in relation to university courses and admission requirements. To enhance access to university information, a mobile application “i-Masomo” was designed, developed and tested. In addition, a web portal was also incorporated to ease information access and decision making from a central point. Consequently, it aims to collate and avail such information on a platform accessible to the students, as well as other interested parties, via mobile phones and web platforms. In Kenya, there has been an increase in demand to access university education. This has been attributed mainly to the increase in number of candidates who obtain the minimum university entry requirement grade of C+ and above in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination. The need to identify the right course and career of choice is evident despite the few slots offered in public universities. This study addresses the recurring problem of students seeking admission to Kenya’s public universities having to manually peruse through large volumes of University Calendar entries in search of their desired degree programs and the requisite requirements for admission to such programs. In Kenya, there is still no integrated system that can be used to identify the right course based on the performance of a student.

This paper describes the step by step design and development techniques and process of the i-Masomo mobile application and the web portal. The findings of this study express that majority of prospective students, parents and teachers access academic related information from the internet. The study also ascertains that the i-Masomo mobile application and the web portal has a significant potential in dissemination of information about university course selection and university enrollment in Kenya.

Keywords: i-Masomo mobile application, access to university education, course selection, university enrollment