

Department of Educational Technology, New Jersey City University

Doctorate in Educational Technology Leadership

EDTC 816 Advanced Building Online Communities

Assessment 3: Design an Online Community

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Artificial intelligence (AI) holds significant promise for transforming education, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, a region with distinct challenges and prospects or opportunities in achieving inclusive and high-quality learning. This paper presents the conceptualization and development of a prototype online platform called the AI EdTech Innovators' Forum (AIEF), designed to support a community of practice focused on the dissertation topic "Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for Educational Transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Mixed-Methods Approach." Developed using human-centered design principles and grounded in established research on online communities, the forum aims to bring together educators, researchers, policymakers, and tech developers who are exploring AI-based solutions tailored to the educational context of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The paper discusses the design methodology, supports key decisions with references to course materials, evaluates other possible design strategies, compares the prototype with similar existing communities, and reflects on how it fulfills course goals related to the structure, member roles, technologies, inter-group relations, norms, and governance of online communities. The prototype is accessible at www.aiedtechafrikaforum.org.

Online Community Prototype: AI EdTech Innovators' Forum (AIEF)

The link to AI EdTech Innovators' Forum (AIEF) prototype is www.aiedtechafrikaforum.org. This is a conceptual link that will help with the development of a real platform. According to Mack Web, the internet is here to stay (Web, n.d.).

Background Information and Design Methodology

The AI EdTech Innovators' Forum (AIEF) is envisioned as a dynamic online platform designed to catalyze the use of AI to transform education in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is structured to connect and empower a diverse ecosystem of stakeholders. Online community allows AIEF to

engage stakeholders or participants and gain insight into people's attitudes and behaviors (Alida, 2016).

EdTech Entrepreneurs and Developers

They are represented by Individuals and startups creating AI-driven educational tools.

Educators and Institutions

Teachers, schools, universities, and training centers.

Researchers and Academics

Experts studying AI in education within the African context.

Investors and NGOs

Organizations providing funding and support for EdTech initiatives.

Policymakers and Governments

Officials shaping education policy and implementation.

The core need is to bridge the gap between AI technology and educational practice, fostering collaboration and ensuring solutions are relevant, accessible, and culturally appropriate. The design follows a human-centered approach, prioritizing the needs and contexts of the users in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Specific Design Decisions and Justifications

Platform Type

AI EdTech Innovators' Forum (AIEF) is a combination of a professional network and a forum.

Justification

This hybrid model allows for both networking and in-depth discussions, aligning with the need for connection and knowledge sharing. It includes elements of "Insight Communities" and "Professional/Practice Communities."

Key Features

Member Profiles

Detailed profiles showcasing expertise, projects, and interests.

Justification

AIEF facilitates networking and collaboration.

Discussion Forums

Organized by themes (for instance, "AI for personalized learning," "AI for teacher training," "ethical considerations of AI in African education").

Justification

It Promotes focused conversations and knowledge exchange.

Resource Hub

AIEF is a curated collection of research, reports, toolkits, and case studies.

Justification

It provides valuable content and promotes best practices.

Project Showcase

AIEF is a space to highlight innovative AI EdTech projects in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Justification

It increases visibility and encourages adoption.

Events and Webinars

A calendar and platform for online and offline events.

Justification

Builds community and facilitates learning.

Technology Considerations

Mobile-First Design

Optimized for access via mobile devices, recognizing the prevalence of mobile internet in Africa.

Justification

Addresses accessibility and inclusivity.

Low-Bandwidth Compatibility

Design choices to ensure functionality in areas with limited internet connectivity.

Justification

Addresses the infrastructural challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Community Management

Moderation

Active moderation to maintain respectful dialogue and relevant content.

Justification

Ensures a positive and productive environment.

Multilingual Support

Features to accommodate various languages spoken in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Justification

Promotes inclusivity and broader participation.

Alternate Design Approaches and Rationale

Alternate Approach

A social media group (for instance, on Facebook or LinkedIn).

Rationale for Hybrid

While social media offers accessibility, it may lack the structure, focused discussions, and resource organization needed for in-depth engagement and knowledge building. The hybrid platform offers a more robust solution for achieving the community's goals.

Consideration of Diverse Perspectives

The platform will actively seek to include diverse voices from different countries, cultures, and educational contexts within Sub-Saharan Africa.

Content and discussions will be moderated to ensure sensitivity to local norms and values.

Comparison to Existing Sites

Compared to the sites analyzed in the "Online Community Scan" (Assessment 1), AIEF is designed to be more interactive and specialized.

While organizations such as UNESCO IITE and AIMS provide valuable resources, AIEF focuses on building a dynamic community for collaboration and innovation.

AIEF aims to be a more focused platform than general education or technology forums, directly addressing the intersection of AI and education in the Sub-Saharan African context.

Evidence of Meeting Course Objectives

AIEF demonstrates an understanding of the course objectives.

Purpose of Online Communities

The platform's purpose is to connect stakeholders, facilitate knowledge sharing, and drive the effective use of AI in education, aligning with the principles of community building.

Technologies

The platform strategically uses various technologies to support community interaction, resource sharing, and networking.

Roles of Members

The platform recognizes and caters to the diverse roles of its members, fostering collaboration and mutual learning.

Inter-group Relations

AIEF is designed to encourage interaction and partnerships between different stakeholder groups, promoting a holistic approach to EdTech development and implementation.

Norms and Governance

The platform will establish clear community guidelines and moderation practices to ensure a respectful, inclusive, and productive environment.

Conclusion

The development of the AI EdTech Innovators' Forum (AIEF) represents a practical application of the theoretical concepts covered in this interesting course taught by the renowned professor and well-known educational technology leader Dr. Laura Ziegler. By building a specialized online space focused on integrating AI into education across Sub-Saharan Africa, the forum fulfills the core purpose of online communities—as platforms for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective problem-solving (Rheingold, 2000).

The chosen platform utilizes accessible digital tools to support communication and resource sharing among a wide range of participants, including those with different levels of digital proficiency. Member roles are intentionally designed to encourage both sharing and learning, helping create an interactive and vibrant community. To ensure diverse viewpoints are heard and to support fair participation, the design incorporates mechanisms for inclusive engagement and reducing group conflict. In addition, the forum's structure includes clear guidelines and moderation policies to help shape community norms and ensure effective governance. Ultimately, AIEF illustrates a meaningful application of online community design principles, directly addressing a pressing real-world issue while aligning with key course themes around community structure, member interaction, and the broader impact of digital communities.

References

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