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On-line learning at universities in developing countries : from leap-frogging to antelope-jumping ; specific needs and solutions

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Abstract

Virtual universities, or at least the on-line delivery of tertiary-level courses, offer tremendous possibilities to the developing countries of the South to raise their educational levels. Countries that lack a sound higher education infrastructure can thereby tap the resources of the more developed countries. They can also use the resources of the information and communication technologies to transmit educational offerings to isolated areas and/or areas in which local higher education possibilities are not available. But there are problems. The telecommunications networks, which are almost always owned and headquartered in the developed countries of the North, charge exorbitant rates for their services. Courses and courseware designed in developed countries are frequently not suitable, from a cultural point of view, for use in the developing countries in the South. These should be designed locally, and local teachers need to be retrained to work in a virtual teaching environment. Despite problems, virtual learning offers a chance for the developing world to surge ahead. (HRK /

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