



Integrating Virtual Worlds and Virtual Learning Environments in Schools in Developing Economies

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ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been significant growth in the use of 3D virtual worlds for e-learning and distance education. Virtual learning environment (VLE) has achieved an adequate level of development and supports teaching and learning in an educational context, offering the functionality to manage the presentation, administration and assessment of coursework. This paper's main philosophical claims are that virtuality is itself a bonafide mode of reality and that VLEs must be understood as a possible platform for effective and quality teaching, learning and training. The paper investigates the suitability of virtual learning in Higher Education Institutions in Africa. It also explains virtual reality principle, describes the interactive educational environment, highlights the challenges HEIs face in the traditional mode of delivery and discusses educational benefits of implementing virtual reality. A number of demonstrative examples showing how virtual world/virtual learning environments can be integrated will be shown and the potential opportunities that exist in this area discussed. The paper then proposes a model for integrating virtual world tools with the existing learning environments.

Keywords: *Virtual worlds, virtual learning environments, e-learning; developing economies, model*