Coetzee Bester:

Reflections On 2011 ANIE Activities Towards Teaching Information Ethics in Africa

Abstract:

This short report on the 2011 ANIE activities towards Teaching Information Ethics in Africa reflects the work that has been done by many dedicated academics and officials.

Agenda:

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Background

ANIE met in Botswana towards the end of 2010 and decided on a number of important steps to enhance the level of awareness about Information Ethics on the African continent. These steps would include research and teaching by various academic colleagues on Information Ethics on the African continent. The mayor factor for ANIE in this regard is probably the decision to focus on the immediate research on a standardized curriculum to teach Information Ethics at various universities in Africa. A list of 12 participating universities has been compiled and our colleagues at these Universities are now waiting for guidance from ANIE.

Resources for the ANIE activities

For the purpose of this short report it is important to take note that the work that ANIE envisage during the next 36 months will have a huge cost implication that the participating Universities will not be able to pay. It was therefore decided that ANIE will formally approach a number of funding partners to assist in this regard. During the past few years ANIE built a good relationship with UNESCO and the South African Government via the Department of Communications (DoC). We therefore again approached these institution for financial assistance. UNESCO already indicated their positive involvement in specific projects. The feedback from the DoC was also positive and they indicated that a formal Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) should be signed by all role players. Based on the ANIE decisions in this regard the MoA will be signed between the University of Pretoria and the Department of Communications in South Africa. This agreement will bring the necessary resources to the ANIE table and ensure sustainability in the objectives for the next 3 years. The final documentation is negotiated at the moment and the signing of the MoA is expected to take place before the end of February 2011.

Progress in the ANIE activities

ANIE can report on a number of 2011 activities. These include:

- The University of Pretoria appointed an Extra Ordinary Lecturer who will (as the Executive Director) coordinate the ANIE activities. The University also allocated offices on campus for the ANIE activities.
- The mentioned Memorandum of Agreement will allocate sustainable resources to the ANIE activities for a period of 3 years.
- A Yale Law School workshop on Access to Knowledge (A2K) took place during January 2011 at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. ANIE participated in this workshop and reported on the objectives towards teaching Information Ethics in Africa.
- An African Multi Stakeholder Forum meeting will take place on 24 and 25 February 2011 in Johannesburg. This event is organised by the South African Government and will reflect on various matters of e-Governance, ICT and Information Ethics on the African continent. During this event ANIE will table the detail of the mentioned MoA as well as the objectives towards Information Ethics in Africa for the next 3 years.
- A research workshop on Information Ethics will take place at the University of Pretoria between 4 and 8 July 2011. This workshop is devoted to a high-level academic interdisciplinary research and discussion on curriculum development on ethical issues dealing with the impact of ICT on African societies. It will elaborate an Africa-oriented teaching structure and content as well as a research agenda on information ethics based on the needs of African societies with special regard of developing issues.
- UNESCO already allocated critical funding for the July research workshop.

Based on the outcome of the mentioned MoA and following on the results of the July 2011 research workshop the detail of the curriculum development process will be available. The curriculum development process will then focus on the content and research towards the curriculum for teaching Information Ethics in Africa. ANIE hopes to be able to report soon thereafter on the role-out plan to implement the teaching of Information Ethics at the identified 12 universities in Africa.