PROPOSAL

AeU Asian Centre of E-Learning (ACE)

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Introduction

The AeU Asia e-Learning Centre (ACE) is an initiative by Asia e University (AeU) to mobilise and garner educational, cultural, economic and social players in Asia in speeding up changes in Asia's move towards a knowledge-based society. ACE is hereby proposed as a hub for Asia to serve as a focal point for the exchange of educational opportunities and knowledge among the communities of the region in all aspects of e learning.

The 3rd ACD Roundtable meeting organised by Asia e University in cooperation with the ACD Secretariat in Bangkok, Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia and Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia was held in March, 2008 in Kuala Lumpur. At the Meeting, the formation of an AeU Asian eLearning Centre was endorsed by the participants of the ACD member countries. It is the hope of Asia e University that the ACD Summit Meeting to be held in Khazakstan in October, 2008 will endorse in principle the establishment of this Centre.

Vision

The AeU Asian Centre of E-Learning (ACE) envisages to be the premier organisation in research, development, promotion and implementation of E-Learning initiatives among countries in Asia in the area of policy, technology, standards, human capacity building and knowledge sharing,

Mission

To contribute to the development and success of member organisations by providing information and advice on E-Learning best practices, techniques and technologies while generating opportunities for networking and access to the collective expertise of members through strategic links among public and private organisations both in Asia and the world to fulfil the vision of ACE

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Objectives

To fulfil the promise of E-Learning initiatives in the Asian region, the principal objectives of ACE are to:

- develop policies and standards for eLearning practices among member organisations
- develop testbeds and prototypes demonstrating the use of eLearning architectures and infrastructure models across all education sectors (universities, schools, vocational education and corporate training).
- maintain an up-to-date database of experts, information and resources on eLearning and to disseminate information about best practices across the region
- provide training and consultative services towards development of e E-Learning skills and competencies
- promote and coordinate collaborative research and development of e E-learning tools, technologies and materials with education, government and corporate partners to solve complex eLearning problems.

Organisational Structure of ACE

The AeU Asian Centre of E-Learning (ACE) shall consist of a Director and such staff as may be required. The Director shall be the chief administrative officer and the legal representative of the Centre. The Centre will consist of five primary units; Policy and Standards Unit, Research & Development Unit, Training & Consultation Unit, and Knowledge Repository Unit and Administration, Finance and Marketing Unit (see Figure 1).

Function and Responsibilities of the FIVE Units

Each of the five units shall have a Coordinator and supporting staff with the following functions and responsibilities.

1) Policy and Standards Unit

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- develop strategic initiatives to integrate e-learning into the mainstream education system of Asian countries
- determine "Who needs what" and "Who have what" and "Know what to share"
- promote the development of national e-learning initiatives by enabling frameworks for active participation of both the public and private sectors.
- develop common academic and quality standards in e E-Learning at a regional level
- promote more effective policy instruments and incentives that allow the development of skills and competencies in e-learning in Asia and facilitate the growth of an "e-Learning Culture"
- facilitate the establishment of a Qualification Framework for the recognition of wholly online programmes among member countries.
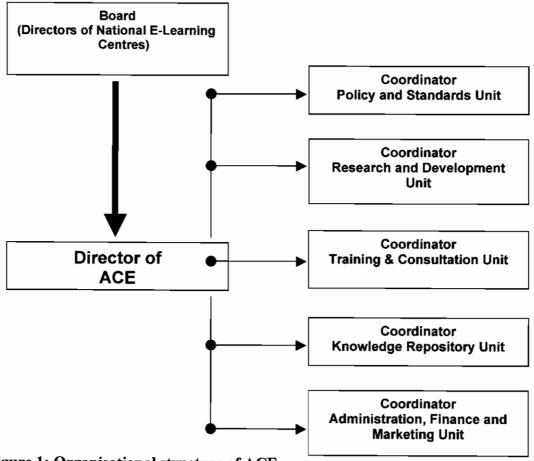
Figure 1: Organisational structure of ACE

2) Research and Development Unit

- initiate requirement analysis with regards to learning technologies
- establish joint research initiatives in eLearning among member countries involving both public and private organisations in quality assurance, interchangeability, interoperatability, standardisation of the learning technologies (LMS, LCMS)
- providing a testbed for industry partners seeking to integrate products and services into the e-learning and information services market.
- engage in research relating to the distributed service management of learning objects
- develop collaboratively appropriate eLearning technologies to ensure that e-learning will not marginalize any specific group.
- explore the possibility of establishing funding mechanisms for the collaborative development of eLearning technologies.
- encourage learning content research and sharing among member countries

3) Training and Consultation Unit

- promote frequent consultation and cooperation among ACD E member countries in order to exchange experiences and best practices in e-learning.
- accelerate the development of e-Learning expertise through academic and training programs.
- encourage staff and student exchange in promoting e-learning among ACD member countries.
- establish a repository of e E-Learning expertise at national and regional levels.

4) Knowledge Repository Unit

- agree on the establishment of a knowledge management framework for the exchange of information in eLearning

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- promote frequent consultation and cooperation among ACD member countries in order to exchange experiences and best practices in e-learning

- empower eLearning communities through the creation of a knowledge repository.

- encourage learning content sharing among member countries.

- developing directory services to support the matching of learners, resources and services in a distributed online environment.

5) Administration, Finance and Marketing Unit

- to carry out all administrative matters in the day to day operations of the Centre

- to carry out all financial matters in the day to day operations of the Centre

- to actively market the products and services of the Centre

It is envisaged that each member country sets up a National eLearning Centre to coordinate and promote eLearning activities in their respective countries. Some member countries have already established such National Centres such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Centre for eLearning for each member country will be headed by a Country Director, who will then oversee the activities of the abovementioned five primary departments within each country (see figure 2).
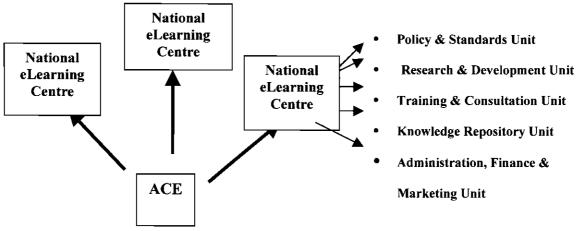

Figure 2: The ACE and its country affiliates

The Director of ACE and Director of the respective National E-Learning Centres will form the Board of ACE. The Chairman of the Board will be the Director of ACE. The Centre shall plan and study the feasibility of regional e-Learning projects, hold conferences and seminars and workshops and promote the utilisation of facilities and professional competence within the region through exchange of students, experts and instructional materials and assist in securing financial support.

Membership

Membership shall be open to any country which is willing to promote cooperation among Asian nations in eLearning.

Funding

The operation budget of ACE will be underwritten by actively participating member institutions. A special ACE Development Fund (ADF) will be established which will receive donations, grants and contributions from individual countries, international agencies and benefactors to support special project and programmes such as training & consultation, seminar & special conferences, personal exchanges, board meetings, maintenance of database and research & development projects.

Benefits to Member Organisations

Member organisations of the ACE will be able to showcase their technological tools and products that will facilitate the development of eLearning in the region. Member organisations will have the opportunity to introduce human capacity building skills through training and consulting. The network will identify experts, best practices and also enable exchange of quality learning materials adding to the prestige of providers.

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Implementation

The AeU Asia Centre of E-Learning (ACE) will be implemented in phases. The initial phase of implementation will be the networking of organisations in the region facilitated by the setting up of a web portal by Asia e University (AeU) to provide quick and easy access to developments across the whole eLearning landscape, up-to-date snapshots of eLearning activity in the region, a platform for collaboration and information sharing, a presence to represent all aspects of the eLearning industry and a global gateway into the eLearning community.

The ACE Portal will evolve through participation of member organisations from both the public and private sectors with opportunities for members to network and leverage on each other's area of expertise. The portal will acts as a virtual meeting place and directory of information for all aspects of e-learning to gain access to the considerable work that is already going on throughout Europe.

CONCLUSION

The Asian Centre of E-Learning (ACE) will be located at Asia E University (AeU) and available facilities and expertise will be at the disposal of the Centre. AeU will provide the infrastructure, technical and personnel requirements to undertake the functions and responsibilities of the four units of the Centre. It is accepted that the goals and objectives of ACE will evolve over time as the strengths of the collaborative partnership are more readily identified and as opportunities emerge for working with different partners.

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