
Nigeria: Oracle, MTN Set to Bridge ICT Skills Gap in Nigeria

OPINION

By Emma Okonji

Having identified shortfalls in skills acquisition in the area of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in Nigeria as a threat to national development, Oracle Corporation, a technology solution company and MTN Foundation (MTNF), the corporate social investment vehicle of MTN Nigeria, have come up with a joint initiative that will bridge ICT skills gap in Nigeria.

Both multinational companies have collaborated to give further ICT training to select MTNF scholars. The collaboration will see two projects come to fruition: a bursary funded by Oracle for one student to attend the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) openlab Summer School in Switzerland, and plans to train up to 2,000 MTNF scholars in database design and SQL and Java programming skills.

MTN, in collaboration with its partner, prepared some select students from across Nigerian tertiary institutions to participate in a global academic competition, organised yearly by CERN openlab, where a computer science student, Mufutau Akuruyejo, from the University of Lagos, emerged the best student from Africa and one of the best 25 students globally that have been selected for a nine week training programme on ICT in Switzerland.

Akuruyejo, an MTNF scholar, will be the first Nigerian student to participate in the nine week programme, which CERN openlab runs annually, and he will be funded by Oracle.

CERN openlab was created more than 10 years ago to tackle computing, data, and infrastructure challenges, and summer school also focuses certain research and development activities in the ICT space.

Corporate Services Executive, MTN Nigeria, Mr. Akinwale Goodluck, said: "At MTN, we believe that education is pivotal to the growth of any nation, which is why we are delighted with this collaboration that will see Mufutau Akuruyejo, an MTN Foundation scholar, leave for Switzerland to participate in the nine-week CERN openlab programme."

Head of CERN openlab, Alberto Di Meglio, said: "Our highly competitive student programme is a cornerstone of CERN openlab, with the students bringing new ideas. This year, we received over 1,500 applications from all over the globe and have selected students of the highest possible caliber. We are very excited to be welcoming them to CERN very soon."

Country Manager, Oracle Nigeria, Mr. Adebayo Sanni, said there was need for Nigeria to bridge the identified ICT skills gap in the country and that the support from Oracle in funding Akuruyejo to Switzerland for ICT training, would assist Nigeria in bridging ICT skills gap in the country. He said Oracle has been involved in several partnerships with state governments to further drive technology development across the country.

The second initiative focuses on teaching database design and SQL and Java programming skills to MTN Foundation Scholars, using Oracle Academy curriculum and hosted on-line learning materials. Students will be taught by two Oracle Academy trained faculty from the Ajayi Crowther University and Aived International who have attended and passed the formal Oracle Academy faculty training courses.

Commenting on the Oracle Academy programme, Goodluck said it would help to further boost the ICT skills in beneficiaries and avail them of valuable opportunities after completing the database design and SQL and Java programming courses.

According to Sanni, "With the rapid adoption of technology in Nigeria, it is imperative that students are equipped with the right skills to take advantage of career and entrepreneurial opportunities."

We support the country's efforts to undertake a digital transformation to help secure its place as a leader in the global economy, he added.

The MTNF Scholarship Scheme covers tuition, books and pocket allowance. It is renewable provided recipients maintain a minimum of 3.5 Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) in their course of study and an overall 2.5 CGPA. In 2012, the scholarship was extended to visually impaired students in public tertiary schools across the country who meet the requirements.

"Corporate social responsibility is at the core of MTN's organizational philosophy and in a few months, the Foundation will be celebrating giant strides it has made in the past decade. We are excited that our mission to improve the quality of life in communities all over the country has yielded great dividends as evidenced by the positive impact our initiatives have had in helping to reduce poverty as well as foster sustainable development in Nigeria," Goodluck added.

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