

Innovative Centre: User experience map

1. The idea

Innovative Centre is a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral centre providing services and support for developing the capacity of the youth in Universities, vocational institutions and high schools and fresh graduates to favorably respond to existing market opportunities in private and public sectors in Uganda.

2. The user

Name: Burua

Age: 20

Sex: Male

Profession: First year BSc. student

Burua is a fresher who has just joined Kyambogo University for a Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition degree which he took up after failing to join Makerere University Medical School. Without any idea about the course and what happens after campus, Burua's hopes and dreams for the future appear doomed. He knows for sure that life after campus is difficult and with parents weaning off financial support thereafter it is even more frustrating. He finds out that the University has inadequate resources for providing the highly needed skills to students. Even the internship which could enhance his soft skills only starts at the end of the second year for two months. The last internship is conducted in the final year for three months. He has heard his friends who are leaving the University say the internship is like a drop in the ocean as it is not enough to gain skills and experience needed to gain employment in the highly competitive world. He also heard during his vacation that now days employers are looking for highly skilled employees to reduce on costs of orientation at work. Burua is now worried about his fate after graduation since he will not have gained enough skills and experience during his time at campus.

3. Recruitment into the Innovative Centre

One early morning when Burua was passing by the department of Home Economics and Human Nutrition's students' notice board he saw something unusual. There on the board was a colourful advert calling for Kyambogo University students right from first to fourth year students to go for a half day Innovative Centre workshop. Through the workshop students would be sensitized on the innovation the centre has towards supporting students gain credible soft skills to enable them harness existing market opportunities. Burua did not think twice but rushed straight to the lecture room and sent the email to the Innovative Centre confirming his attendance for the workshop. On Thursday at exactly 8.30am Burua with a few of his colleagues sat firmly with lots excitement. The department of Home Economics and Human Nutrition hall

was full to the brim and some students who did not register for the workshop had to painfully get sent away. Everyone wondered who on earth is the Innovative Centre and what kind of heart they have towards students. The smartly dressed and happy facilitators were introduced to the students by the dean of faculty of vocational studies. The facilitators took over and started the workshop by showing the students video testimonials of people just like them who have made it past University. They were also showed testimonials from employers talking about their desire to help students become better employers. At the end of the video shows students asked several questions they had about the centre and how they could immediately get engaged. The workshop concluded with a call for interested students to apply for admission into the centre. There were only 30 places available for grabs. Again without hesitation Burua happily applied for consideration and successfully went through series of interviews. At the end he was among the luck 30 pioneer students from different departments of Kyambogo recruited into the Innovative Centre.

4. Market and employer research

The coaches from the centre having identified and enrolled the 30 pioneer students into the centre, conducted market and employer research. This would help match the likes of Burua to an organization, company or business where he would receive real life experience of work.

5. Burua gets into the mentorship program in the Innovative Centre

During the semester Burua attends six, one day capacity building and mentorship workshops organized by the Innovative Centre where he acquires a vast of knowledge and skills. The workshops are conducted for only one day to keep the learning process more engaging and less tasking. The learning process is made fun as it uses more of storytelling through video testimonials, audios and team building activities. Burua gets to personally know each of his colleagues and mentors. He wishes his University lectures were as stimulating as the workshops. Each workshop is held twice a month. At the end of each workshop each student is given a specific task/challenge to accomplish and report upon to the entire team at the beginning of the next workshop. This encourages team working, documentation and joint celebration of achievements. At the end of the semester, Burua attends six workshops and is rewarded with a certificate of completion that is nicely framed and has his photo on the first day of the first workshop. The University dean awards the certificates of completion of the first series of mentorship workshop to each of the 30 students in front of their colleagues, mentors, other lecturers and potential employers. Burua goes back home a different character with a treasured certificate that he shows of to his parents, friends and neighbours. He glads includes this achievement in his CV.

6. Placement to organizations for holiday work

As other first year students head home for holidays, Burua and his 29 colleagues are given specific terms of reference and placed to organizations to acquire work experience by the Innovative Centre. Each student is required to accomplish each of the tasks spelt out in the terms of reference within two months of holidays while in the organizations they are placed in. Their coaches are providing them with all the necessary support including weekly feedback and review meetings to understand their progress. Because the host organizations have identified mentors to work directly with each of the students, the work experience is fun for all the learners. The host organization in order to make sure everyone in the organization understands and appreciates the role of the students in the organization organizes a general meeting. During the meeting the head of the organization introduced the new changes and requested their mentors to introduce the students to the staff. Each student presented what they were going to do in the two months, how their presence was going to make a difference in the organization and requested for specific support from each of the staff. At the end of the two months of placement, the students wrote a placement report and made power point presentation to all the staff in another meeting. The students had done well, helped identify some of the gaps in running business of the organization and made recommendations for improvement. The head of the organization was impressed and assured the students they had their places in the organization the next holidays. Each student received placement certificate and the success was celebrated together.

7. Next workshops conducted in the new semesters

Experiential learning from the industrial placements is held for all students to share what they learnt. Each student was tasked to design and refine the idea from the projects identified from the different organizations during placement. At this point the mentors emphasized team work, leadership, communication, flexibility, critical thinking and entrepreneurship. Burua and his team mates completed the tasks and were rewarded with certificates for successfully writing viable projects. Besides the development of the ideas for different organizations, Burua was introduced to UHMG and Mariestoppes where he receives health and nutrition products to his community and fellow students to earn commission. With the help of their mentors, Burua and his colleagues in the centre started freelance consultancy services, small scale food production and marketing. During weekends and in the evening after classes they process nutritious food stuff and sell to different catering institutions and clients around the university.

Burua continues with the bi-monthly workshops where his mentors engage them in more entrepreneurship and leadership activities until they complete their semesters. At the end they receive certificate of completion and proceed to the next internship.

8. One year long placement to organizations

Burua's mentor helps him refine the proposal he started with on return from the first internship indicating the gaps identified in the organization, how they are going to get addressed and what it will cost to address the gaps. Through his mentor, the proposal is presented to the organization. The organization is impressed with Burua's proposal and he is rewarded with one year paid placement. With yet another set of clearly defined terms of reference developed by the mentor and cleared by the organization, Burua sets off for internship at the end of the second year. As he does the internship he continues working with his mentors at the centre and in the organization to ensure he gets all the necessary support. At the same time, Burua starts receiving special training as a mentor, his story is documented via video and will be shared with the next members of the centre. At the end of the second internship, Burua follows the same procedures as for the first internship but this time he is assured of returning to the centre for another 9 months at the third year.

At the centre, the students get special workshops which focus on training them as mentors. Because the centre has been sharing the story of the program with the country on TV, the employers have flocked the centre and are demanding for goods and services from them. The centre responds by tasking Burua and colleagues to work with new teams from the University to address the customer needs. This time the centre requested the new mentors to reach out to more students in different faculties and universities too.

9. Scaling up the program

At the end of the first cycle, the centre had produced 30 students with three years' work experience who got jobs before they left University. The 30 students had also recruited additional 120 students to join the program—more departments were engaged and other two universities applied too.

To celebrate the success, the centre organized a big workshop to graduate off those who have completed the program. Employers, government, development partners, businesses and other training institution representatives were invited into the workshop to witness how the centre had contributed to transform the lives of the pioneers of the program. The proceedings of the workshop were screened live on TV and radio so everyone could hear and see a low cost innovation destined to change how the youth in and out of school would change own lives and those of communities. Burua became a senior mentor who kept graduating more youth from the centre and creating more opportunities for others. He and his colleagues working through Pop Up Bus model successfully mobilized training institutions, youth and employers to create innovators who graduated from training institutions with at least three years' work experience! By the end of the first year, Burua and his colleagues helped solve pressing development, health and economic challenges in the country through a simple sacrifice of attending mentorship workshops and placements.

