1) Africa's growing demand for accessible education has pushed millions toward self-directed e-learning, yet the current ecosystem is failing to deliver. These barriers include accessibility, lack of contextualized content, and continuity issues.

1. **Accessibility:** Digital access remains a critical barrier to self-learning in Africa. Around 89% of students in Sub-Saharan Africa do not have a household computer, and 82% have no internet access at home (Mo Ibrahim Foundation). Internet access is largely absent in rural areas, where only 23% of people are online (ITU).
2. **Affordability:** In Sub-Saharan Africa, 54% of adults say they are very worried about paying school fees, and 29% name school fees as their *single biggest* financial worry; among those, 58% already borrow (World Bank Blogs). High internet costs are a large part of this problem: the average cost of 1 GB of data in Africa is 5.7% of the monthly income (Global Voices).
3. **Lack of Contextualized Content:** A significant amount of e-learning content in Africa is based on Western audiences, resulting in a mismatch with local needs. Currently, many African institutions rely on UK/US textbooks, and there is an insufficient amount of locally developed content (Nhando). Not only do these contents fail to help learners engage and comprehend content, but they could also preclude students from applying what they learn within their local context (Nhando).
4. **User Continuity:** self-paced e-learning comes with the challenge of keeping learners motivated. Globally, online courses suffer from high dropout rates–traditional self-paced courses often see only 10–15% of learners finish (Matsh People Development). This problem is amplified in Africa, as many learners are first-generation tertiary students or juggling work and family responsibilities, making sustained engagement especially difficult ("21st Century Distance Learning in Sub-Saharan Africa").

To address accessibility, *The Experts* need to adopt a low-bandwidth, mobile-first model that runs on basic smartphones and messaging platforms. *The Experts* should leverage WhatsApp as a learning platform to address this. WhatsApp is one of Africa's most ubiquitous apps, where over 95% of internet users in South Africa use WhatsApp regularly (Statista). Using WhatsApp circumvents heavy data requirements and removes the need for large applications, expensive devices, or unfamiliarity. Building on the increasing mobile penetration (Reuters) among young people in Africa, MIT's research in South Africa states that WhatsApp can be an effective low-tech medium for online learning because it addresses common concerns about connectivity and location (MIT Governance Lab). Additionally, the feasibility of this solution is demonstrated through the case where Kenya's Eneza Education delivered lessons via basic SMS on feature phones that did not require data plans (UNESCO).

To improve affordability, *The Experts* should embed a **"learn-now-pay-later" (LNPL)** model that combines pay-as-you-go tuition or an income-linked repayment. Similar models using mobile money are already proven at scale: Mastercard's Pay on Demand framework documents how African consumers routinely use small, flexible digital installments to afford energy, phones, and other essentials (Efficiency for Access). LNPL for *The Experts* would apply the same logic to human capital: learners pay little or nothing upfront, then pay in progressive, small mobile-money installments over time or once an income threshold is reached, working around the issue of individual economic concerns.

To address overly western e-learning in Africa, *The Experts* should build a locally contextualized curriculum by collaborating with African industry experts and curating existing

online libraries. This process includes adapting foreign materials into versions that align with local industries, cultures, and languages. Such localization ensures that learning is both relevant and applicable. Private-sector and employer-co-designed training has already shown results: in a recent initiative across Eastern Africa, graduates' employment rates rose from 47 percent to 79 percent after industry-aligned vocational training (World Bank, "Skills Training Is…").

To strengthen user continuity, The Experts should provide live or recorded classes led by local professionals, creating mentorship opportunities. A mentorship-based approach allows learners to engage actively rather than passively consuming content, and mentors can tailor guidance to each learner's progress. This mentorship model should be delivered in a blended format to ensure flexibility and reach. Motivational strategies would be more effective once issues of affordability and contextualized content have been resolved.

Summary table:

Barrier	Description	Solution
Accessibility	Most learners lack computers and high bandwidth internet.	Low-bandwidth, mobile-first delivery on basic smartphones and WhatsApp,
Affordability	The cost of learning is high; Mobile data is expensive.	LNPL tuition via micro-repayments or income-linked payment.
Lack of Contextualized Content	Online content is largely Western, reducing relevance and applicability.	Locally developed curriculum through local experts and curation of existing libraries.
User Continuity & Motivation	Self-paced courses have extremely high dropout rates.	Blended online and local mentorship from industry experts for pertinence, networking, and contextualization.

2) Self-paced e-learning and coaching platforms around the world tend to share a set of standard "hygiene factors," meaning the minimum expectations a platform should contain, such as video-based modules, mobile accessibility, certificates of completion, progress tracking, discussion forums, and a recommendation algorithm for content. Major platforms like Coursera, Udemy, and ALX already provide these features, and many of them are optimized for low-bandwidth playback or mobile phones. Because these baseline features are widely available, they do not offer a competitive advantage.

For *The Experts* to differentiate itself in the African market, it must respond to the specific structural barriers that limit self-paced e-learning outcomes in Africa. Unlike Coursera or Udemy, using WhatsApp is already an exceptionally low-bandwidth workaround. Our solution can outcompete global platforms on cost and digital friction, especially in markets where data expenses limit learning. Coursera's courses can easily be upwards of 5-6GB at 480p, which is unaffordable for most (1 GB of data is on average 5.7% of monthly income) ("How Coursera Will…"). Furthermore, 79% of youth/adults in Sub-Saharan Africa lack basic digital skills (World Bank); creating a new learning platform can be needlessly high-friction. Therefore, using a familiar platform reduces digital friction for implementation.

The Experts' localized content model, built with African subject-matter experts, creates an academic and commercial relevance that global platforms cannot replicate. 21 countries in

Sub-Saharan Africa have French as an official language, yet mainstream learning platforms remain predominantly English-focused (Library of Congress). Additionally, *The Experts'* embedding employer co-designed learning systems would help solve the gap where only 10% of African graduates currently see employment outcomes (ACET). This changes online learning from generic certificate collection into employability, as our platform leads directly to employer needs instead of an online award.

3) To evaluate both learning outcomes and labor-market impact, *The Experts* should use a mixed quantitative-qualitative measurement framework aligned with standards used by organizations like UNESCO, the World Bank, but should focus on two key performance metrics: learning quality and market impact.

Learning Quality: core KPIs should include course completion rates, module-level engagement, digital skills acquisition benchmarks, and assessment performance tied to practical tasks. African online learning programs usually have completion rates below 15%, and most students drop out within the first two weeks. Because of this, tracking early-stage engagement is especially critical. Measuring digital literacy progression—such as increases in basic ICT competency—aligns with UNESCO's Digital Skills Global Framework and allows *The Experts* to verify whether learners are gaining foundational abilities that lead to employability. Learner satisfaction and qualitative feedback from coaching sessions should also be included to capture the user experience behind the numbers.

Labor-market Impact: The platform should track job placement rates, income changes, internship conversions, and employer satisfaction with graduates. The World Bank emphasizes that credible skills platforms must demonstrate "employability evidence," meaning actual transitions into work, not just certificates earned. Therefore, KPIs like time-to-employment after course completion, percentage of learners matched to employers through the platform, and retention in jobs after six months are essential. Additional qualitative indicators—such as learner confidence, perceived job readiness, and employer evaluation of practical skills—help explain why certain programs succeed or fail. User and corporate data can be collected through online forms. For governments, donors, and investors, *The Experts* can use longitudinal tracking to show multi-year outcomes, such as career progression or increases in earnings, which organizations like ALX and Andela use to demonstrate systemic impact. By integrating both statistical performance metrics and human-centered qualitative evaluations, *The Experts* can build a transparent, credible impact model that reflects real improvements in learning, employability, and long-term livelihood outcomes for African youth.

4) Here is a suggested Go-to-Market strategy for The Experts. Each phase should last as long as needed to generate clear, defensible outcomes before scaling to the next.

Phase 1 - Employer First: Co-designed AI upskilling sprints

Focus: Launch with 3–5 private-sector partners across key growth industries, such as telecom (e.g., MTN, Safaricom), logistics (e.g., Kobo360), and banking (e.g., Ecobank), by co-creating short AI learning sprints tied to specific operational challenges (e.g., AI for customer service automation, fraud detection, or delivery route optimization). Content will be delivered in a blended model, via WhatsApp-based AI coaches, while concurrently running live class sessions with employer/company mentors for the application of AI tools to the firm's processes.

Rationale: Anchoring on employers ensures learning is demand-driven, as companies across Africa face digital skill gaps. For example, 61% of firms report AI expertise as "absolutely essential" to their future success, while 90% of firms report AI talent shortages already undermining operations (Ecofin Agency). By co-designing curricula with these firms, *The Experts* guarantee skill relevance and applicability for learners, as evident from the World Bank's study showing that embedding industry partnerships in training programs can improve graduate employment by 32% in Africa.

Phase 2 - University Channel: Co-Branded Learning Programs for scalability

Focus: Leverage the content and success of phase 1 to partner with leading universities and colleges, such as the University of Lagos, the University of Nairobi, Ashesi University, and TVET authorities, including Rwanda Polytechnic and Kenya's National Industrial Training Authority (NITA), embedding the AI learning as programs within their curricula. Institutions are selected based on four criteria: (1) strong ICT or business programs; (2) high graduate volumes; (3) alignment with national digital skills priorities; and (4) a demonstrated interest in industry-aligned learning (e.g., existing partnerships with companies or tech hubs). Deliveries could combine the platform's learning modules with the institution's faculty oversight, fulfilling the blended format of phase 1.

Rationale: Embedding these programs in universities massively expands reach and credibility. A single partnership with a university can funnel hundreds of students through *The Experts'* training at a low marketing cost. Most importantly, university co-branding confers legitimacy, improving applicability even without the codevelopment of an employer for learners. Pairing with universities improves scalability for the program and aligns with national African learning programs: African TVET strategies highlight that private-sector partnerships and co-designed curricula are vital to keeping programs job-focused (UNESCO, "Building the Future of Skills"). Furthermore, these academic partnerships strengthen the development of localized content. Working with universities means that the faculty expertise, local case studies, and region-specific examples allow our learning programs to be grounded in African industries and contexts, adding to one of our core solutions: high-quality localized content.

Phase 3 - National Expansion via Policy and Partnerships

Focus: integrate *The Experts* into public sector initiatives and programs. Phase 3 is the ultimate goal for *The Experts*, as the platform transitions from individual partnerships to system-level adoption, scaling larger than traditional competitors such as Coursera and Udemy. Working with ministries of education, labour, ITC, or multi-stakeholder coalitions would secure funding and national-level scalability, embedding this system into employment and training schemes for countries.

Rationale: The groundwork of Phases 1-2 positions *The Experts* to engage governments, as it strongly aligns with current national priorities. By 2030, AI could create 230 million new jobs in Africa, and many African governments have already launched ambitious skilling agendas (Microsoft News). For example, Nigeria's national strategy commits to training 70% of youth in AI by 2030 ("AI and the Workforce in Africa") and a panAfrican ministerial summit in 2025 (the Cotonou Declaration) set targets to provide basic digital skills to 20 million people and 2 million new digital jobs for youth and women (World Bank, "Harnessing Digital Potential"). *The Experts* can leverage these initiatives by positioning themselves as an implementation partner. Not only does this strategy align with governmental goals, but it also aligns with public

interest. Surveys show 73% of firms in Nigeria and 70% in Zimbabwe want increased public investment in upskilling programs: far above the global average ("The Future of Jobs in Sub-Saharan Africa"). This suggests a strong opportunity for embedding in national programs.

Summary table:

Phase	**Focus**	**Outcomes**
Employer-First Rollout	Co-design AI sprints and educational programmes with companies, tied to specific corporate needs	Defensible training model with measurable statistics (statistics to be used in sales pitches for later phases
University Channel	Embed co-branded programs into academic programs for local universities with faculty oversight	Scalable distribution channel; consistent student throughput; strengthened legitimacy and regional relevance
National Expansion	Integrate The Experts into national skills initiatives and workforce programs by working with coalitions or national ministries.	System-level adoption; funded, country-wide scale; defensible position above traditional online-course competitors

A communications plan will build momentum for *The Experts* through Phases 1-3. Communication should be rolled out in sequence.

1. **Employers first:** Outreach should start B2B with companies. *The Expert's* communication and value proposition should be based on the fact that the learning platform aligns with corporate needs. World Bank's Estimates say that by 2030, between 50% and 55% of jobs in Sub-Saharan Africa will require some level of digital skills (World Bank, "Demand for Digital…"). 9 in 10 firms report AI talent shortages (Ecofin Agency). *The Experts* should emphasize to firms how co-developing training programs helps close these shortages.
2. **Academic Partnerships:** With employer endorsements, communications should broaden. *The Experts* should approach universities by using the data generated from Phase 1 as part of their value proposition: proof that the platform drives measurable outcomes for users. In Ghana, a study found that only a tenth of graduates were employed within one year of finishing university (ACET). *The Experts* should communicate how our platform can lead to higher employability rates for their students.
3. **Policymakers and Donors:** Finally, with successful formal business and university implementations, *The Experts* should approach governments or coalitions to embed the platform in national initiatives. *The Experts* should leverage the fact that African governments and global donors are already prioritising digital skills investments, and should highlight how the learning platform aligns with that. Additionally, company and university data should be used to show the genuineness and effectiveness of the learning.

In summary, our communications rollout is sequenced to build a crescendo of legitimacy: starting with business ROI statistics, then showcasing academic and student success, and culminating in appealing to the alignment with national development narratives.

5) **Misalignment with Labor Market Trends:** *The Experts* could offer training that doesn't match the fast-evolving job market needs. Sub-Saharan Africa's labor force is at exponential growth, yet skills mismatches persist (University of the Witwatersrand). For example, in Kenya, a large share of youth unemployment is attributed to graduates "without the skills needed by the job market" (University of the Witwatersrand). Many businesses in Africa identify this mismatch as a barrier to growth (World Economic Forum).

Mitigation: *The Experts* must continuously align curricula with labor market data and employer input. Structuring learning programs around employers already helps alleviate this risk. Programs must continually be updated to maintain applicability and relevance for learners. As the World Bank Group notes, employers must be at the center of skills programs, which is why we put it as the first step in our GTM outline.

Fragility in Low-Infrastructure settings: The platform's mobile-first, WhatsApp-based delivery faces infrastructure constraints in many African markets. Only about 27% of sub-Saharan Africans use mobile internet as of 2023, and network quality is uneven, especially in rural areas (Thigo et al.). Compounding this, just ~43% of Africans have reliable electricity access, causing frequent outages. These factors weaken the user experience – connectivity drops or power cuts could disrupt the WhatsApp learning sessions.

Mitigation: Design for ultra-low bandwidth and offline use. The use of WhatsApp (a lightweight, text-based medium) is therefore wise. Ensuring content is downloadable or accessible offline can keep learners engaged during connectivity gaps. Mobile-centric solutions are important, as sub-Saharan smartphone penetration is projected to reach 88% by 2030: platform accessibility will scale over time.

Credibility Dilution: As *The Experts* platform scales through business and university partnerships, there is a risk of quality dilution and brand risk. Relying on external partners introduces variability: if a partner delivers sub-par learning experiences, the negative outcome will reflect on the Experts' brand. Past public-private efforts in education have experienced similar problems, as poorly managed partnerships have led to uneven quality and low accountability for outcomes (Oxfam, "False Promises").

Mitigation: Strategy should be controlled and quality-focused. *The Experts* should set clear performance metrics and oversee every partnership, emphasizing the quality of the content, rather than the quantity. The platform should establish clear quantitative benchmarks, such as minimum completion rates, learner satisfaction goals, and employment outcomes. These metrics should be monitored by *The Experts* continually.

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