



Sky's the limit for billionaire IT student

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Here is East Africa's 22-year-old billionaire student: Ssekakala is a student at Makerere University's School of Computing and Informatics Technology (CIT) in neighbouring Uganda. PHOTO | DAILY MONITOR

By Patience Ahimbisibwe, success@thecitizen.co.tz
At just 22, Abdu Ssekakala appears to be an ordinary student, but as the old adage goes: looks can be deceptive. The young man is no ordinary student. While his colleagues wait to celebrate their final exam at university next month, he is already thinking about his next big challenge: how to improve his first innovation, a computer application.

While others worry about where to find a job and earn their first salary, buy their vehicle and furnish their rented apartments, Ssekakala is keenly watching the number of downloads of his application in one column while he calculates the financial return the hits make.

Meet Ssekakala, a student at Makerere University's School of Computing and Informatics Technology (CIT) in neighbouring Uganda, who has so far developed at least nine internationally recognised mobile phone applications that are not only building his career as an innovator but minting millions of shillings for him.

Ssekakala got his break when Nokia, an international mobile phone company organised a special training session to help

software developers hone their skills.

The training in April and May last year presented a major break for the young man, whose application has crossed quarter a million hits so far.

While Ssekakala's success has excited his colleagues and trainers at Makerere, the challenge is where he will manage to control the excitement and keep focused.

The young achiever says this is exactly what he is gunning for. Software development has lately become a global hit to make dollar millionaires and billionaires with the likes of Mark Zuckerberg, founder of the social networking site Facebook.

Zuckerberg, founded Facebook with his colleagues while he was still a student at Harvard in 2004.

Ssekakala's most successful application is the Wordbook, which has already gone commercial and is making him a Euro per download or Sh2,050. Wordbook is a dictionary application with word of the day capability fully packed with definitions, examples and a selection of related words.

Clear focus

Ssekakala said his current success was guided by a clear focus and paying attention and making the best of the training opportunity when it presented itself.

"I paid attention throughout the sessions because I didn't want to miss any information that I would [later] need. When we were asked to develop our own, I put my best and luckily my applications have been adopted by Nokia," Ssekakala said.

The applications are available on the Nokia Ovi Store with one of them, the Uganda Theme, a free download, which has attracted over 300, 000 downloads making it the third most downloaded application.

The Nokia Ovi Store, is the firm's application store. In 2010, Nokia rolled out a platform that allows developers of data to sell it easily to its intended users worldwide.

And now, bloggers, online publishers and website developers can use Nokia's Ovi Store to sell their graphics, music, movies, ring tones, text, software, digital assets and document formats.

Ovi Store is a collection of Internet services accessible via Nokia mobile devices, and keeps people connected to others. It also includes navigation and premium travel content, music downloads, email and messaging, and the sharing content.

Advice to young people

There is nothing impossible once you are determined to achieve your goals. He encourages young people to utilise all chances available while still in school.

The college's training was aimed at improving the student's mobile application development techniques to enable the public use Ugandan products world over and improve the visibility of the local software developers in the country.

Ssekalala is paid for the different brands that advertise through his applications.

Ssekalala, who is poised to finish his studies in June, already owns two companies — Gogetta, which employs eight people and Foo Technology with seven employees.

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