

**DOCTORAL CANDIDATE:** Pandula Anilpriya Siribaddana  
**DEGREE:** Philosophiae Doctor  
**FACULTY:** Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences  
**DEPARTMENT:** Department of Informatics  
**AREA OF EXPERTISE:** Health Informatics/medical education  
**SUPERVISORS:** Professor Sundeep Sahay/Professor Jens  
Kaasbøll  
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of practice around health information systems*

For many years, millions of dollars have been spent on improving the healthcare systems in developing countries by implementing high-end software solutions – which are internet based. However, many such projects failed to sustain or achieve its intended goals due to various reasons. One of the key reasons is the lack of trained staff that could take over the tasks of maintaining and expanding the use of such software without having to depend on funding and expertise from developed countries and aid organizations. This research demonstrates the ability of internet based (online) learning tools in overcoming this problem and create an environment where software solutions could truly be useful in developing countries.

The research was based on the decades of experience gathered by the health information systems program (HISP) at the Department of Informatics, University of Oslo. The research findings were based on data gathered over four years from through training programs carried out in multiple countries in East Africa, West Africa, Latin America and Asia. For providing training, the research made use of a freely available internet based learning software – Moodle – which made the training affordable and standardized. Thus, one of the key features of the proposed training strategy is its affordability when training people in low resource settings.

According to the research findings, the use of online learning tools not only can impart better learning but also facilitate community building. In other words, online learning can lead to improved cohesion among the learners around software used in health – thus facilitating the growth, survival and performance of such software in developing countries. Furthermore, the research brings to the forefront the importance of training when setting up health related software utilizing millions of dollars. For the educators, the research provides an in-depth understanding of how learners would progress through online learning programs. This would mean that in the future, online learning programs would not only be used to impart knowledge, but would also be used to build active communities in developing settings –thus overcoming the decades old information challenges to a significant extent.