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e-SHE: A Digital Transformation of Ethiopian Higher Education

Introduction

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Ministry of Education has embarked on a transformative journey to digitalize its higher education system. The e-Learning for Strengthening Higher Education (e-SHE) program, a significant component of this initiative, is a five-year multi-stakeholder initiative implemented by the FDRE Ministry of Education in partnership with Mastercard Foundation, Arizona State University, Shayashone(SYS), and the 50 Ethiopian public universities. The initiative leverages the expertise of EdPlus at ASU and the Open edX platform to deliver high-quality, accessible, and scalable online learning experiences and seeks to train 800,000 students, alongside training instructors, instructional designers, and IT support staff.

It intends to strengthen the capacities of public universities to deliver online education. Conceived to boost the relevance, quality, access, and resilience of higher education in Ethiopia, the e-SHE initiative will develop and support the establishment of state-of-the-art facilities and systems for reliable online education in higher education in Ethiopia.

The Need for Digital Innovation

Ethiopia's higher education sector has faced persistent challenges related to quality, access, and resilience.

- **Quality Learning:** Better content, diversity and number of learning materials (digital content), capacity of trainers to prepare and deliver content
- **Access and Equity:** Improved opportunities for open, distance, non-formal, informal education and enhancing the delivery mechanisms
- **Resilience and Responsiveness:** Heavy dependence on face-to-face learning exposed vulnerabilities during crises like COVID-19; Limited local capacity for rapid digital content development; Need for systems that adapt quickly to disruptions and evolving workforce demands

The Goals

- **Enhance digital skills:** Improve the digital skills of instructors, students, and staff.
- **Improve access to quality learning:** Expand access to quality education through digitization.
- **Produce a skilled workforce:** Develop a competent and entrepreneurial workforce.
- **Enhance education system resilience:** Make the education system more resilient to disruptions.



The Solution: The Open edX Project and e-SHE

To address these challenges, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education selected the Open edX platform as the foundation for its e-SHE project. Key features of the solution include:

- **Centralized Learning Platform:**
The Open edX implementation serves as the core platform for delivering online courses to learners across Ethiopia's 50 public universities.
- **Customizable Learning Experience:**
The platform is customized to meet the specific needs of each university, allowing for tailored learning experiences.
- **Scalability:**
The Open edX platform enables e-SHE to scale its operations, accommodating a growing number of learners and courses.
- **Data Management and Tracking:**
The platform integrates with Salesforce to track learner progress, manage grades, and ensure data security and compliance.
- **Teacher Training:**
The Open edX platform is used to deliver online training courses to teachers, equipping them with the skills needed to effectively teach online.
- **Accessibility and Flexibility:**
The platform provides accessible and flexible learning opportunities for learners, enabling them to learn at their own pace and from any location.



Key Benefits of e-SHE

- **Increased Access:** Breaking down geographical barriers and providing flexible learning opportunities.
- **Enhanced Learning Experiences:** Engaging learners with interactive content and personalized learning paths.
- **Improved Teacher Capacity:** Empowering faculty with the tools and training to deliver effective online courses.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Leveraging analytics to optimize the learning experience.
- **Scalability:** Accommodating a growing number of learners and courses.
- **Digital Literacy of Students:** Building foundational digital skills and confidence to thrive in an online learning environment.



Outcomes

e-SHE's user base is continually growing as universities begin e-learning efforts. The target population is 800k across the 50 universities, and already e-SHE has seen over 250k learners active on the platform in just the first year since students were added. EdPlus at ASU, known for its expertise in educational technology, through the e-SHE program has provided 13 courses to increase online learning readiness and digital literacy. e-SHE has seen over 23k trainees complete a workshop on how to teach online, with a project goal to grow that number to 35k.

To support multimedia content development for the platform's online courses, the e-SHE program has also launched seven multimedia centers at cluster universities to support robust e-learning content creation and support their regional cluster universities.

Milestones

The project has achieved significant milestones, including:

- **Large-scale adoption:** Over 150,000 learners have actively used the platform in its first year.
- **Customizable solution:** The platform has been tailored to meet Ethiopia's specific educational needs, integrating with Salesforce for data management and featuring custom roles and front-end portals.
- **Scalability:** The platform has demonstrated its ability to handle a large number of users and courses.
- **Positive impact:** The project is expected to contribute to improved student outcomes, increased access to education, and enhanced teacher capacity.

While the program is still in its early stages, it has already shown promising results and has the potential to revolutionize higher education in Ethiopia.



“The primary reason we chose the Open edX platform over other platforms is its open-source nature, along with its robust and highly customizable features that meet the unique requirements of both the ministry and the universities.”

Basiliyos Tilahun

Future Directions

The e-SHE program is poised to further enhance the Ethiopian higher education landscape. Future plans include:

- **Expanding Course Offerings:**
Developing a wider range of courses to meet diverse learner needs.
- **Strengthening Partnerships:**
Collaborating with international institutions and organizations.
- **Investing in Infrastructure:**
Improving internet connectivity and digital literacy.
- **Enhancing Data Analytics:**
Utilizing advanced analytics to gain deeper insights into learner behavior.

By utilizing Open edX, e-SHE aims to improve the quality of higher education in Ethiopia, enhance student learning outcomes, and equip learners with the skills needed for the 21st-century workforce.



**The Organizations
That Made This
Project Possible:**



In partnership with



You can find out more about the e-Learning for Strengthening Higher Education (e-SHE) program via our [website](#), or on our [LinkedIn page](#).