e-Learning for Strengthening Higher Education

Digital Education in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has developed "Digital Strategy Ethiopia 2025" as a roadmap for the country's digital transformation. In line with this strategy, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Education (MoE) has approved the Digital Skills Country Action Plan (DSCAP) for 2020-2030. The Ethiopian higher education system has been expanding over the last decades. Currently, there are 50 public universities hosting more than half a million students in undergraduate and postgraduate programs. After years of investment to expand university uptake capacity, the MoE is taking a strategic shift towards digital education as a cost effective, sustainable, and resilient alternative delivery modality.

Though Ethiopian Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) have made significant investments aimed at building connectivity and enhancing the ICT infrastructure, the state of digital education remains limited. Currently there is no public university offering accredited online degrees at undergraduate or postgraduate levels. The absence of online education as an alternative modality has not only resulted in compromised quality, affordability, and accessibility of education but also made the sector vulnerable to external shocks. The latter was particularly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic when all the HEIs were closed and unable to reach their students.

About e-SHE

The e-Learning for Strengthening Higher Education (e-SHE) is a five-year multistakeholder initiative implemented by the FDRE Ministry of Education in partnership with Mastercard Foundation, Arizona State University, Shayashone PLC, and the 50 Ethiopian public universities. 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.

Targets

A five-year initiative, whose crucial ground works have been put in place in the past 10 months, e-SHE is looking to achieve the following targets:

50 Public Universities

800,000 Students

35,000 Instructors

5 Multimedia Studios

2 Model Diaital Courses

Key intervention areas of the e-SHE initiative

1) Establish Multimedia Studios
Multimedia studios play a vital role in the production of high-quality digital content for online and/or education. The e-SHE Initiative will establish studios at five cluster-lead universities: namely, Addis Ababa University, Bahirdar University, Dire Dawa University, Hawassa University, and Jimma University. These multimedia resource centers will serve the host universities and the cluster member universities until each institution establishes its own center. They are intended to be a model for the MoE , universities, and partner organizations for future investment in multimedia studios.

2) Human Resource Development
The e-SHE initiative focuses on building the capacities of ICT experts, instructors, and students. The emphasis of the capacity building for instructors is on enhancing the competencies required to develop and deliver digital teaching and learning. To this end, Arizona State University is delivering two capacity building courses for selected instructors who will cascade the full training package to potentially reach 35,000 instructors across the 50 public universities in the country. The capacity building for ICT specialists emphasizes building their skills to manage and support digital education development through multimedia studios and e-learning platforms. In preparing the students to be ready to learn in an online format, the initiative also delivers training content and resources to enhance the digital skills of students. The e-SHE initiative has the potential to reach 800,000 students for years to come.

3) Learning Management Systems (LMS) –› e-Learning Ecosystem
The e-SHE initiative is also adopting and rolling out an online e-learning ecosystem that offers students a holistic and consistent experience that is critical to improving student and workforce development outcomes. Arizona State University, with guidance from the Ministry and the 50 public universities, is building the initial framework and implementing the technology components and the individual university branding schemes. The technology development and implementation are designed to ensure knowledge transfer and sustainability. This scalable e-learning ecosystem hosts a portal, a hub or access point that centrally displays both the digital learning content and resources for students and faculty; an e-learning platform where learning actually takes place and the digital content students access lives; and a universal e-learning information system specifically designed to provide university staff and ICT professionals with the data, information, and tools needed to organize, evaluate, and efficiently run their e-learning programs.

4) Digital Content Development
Developing quality digital content is a crucial intervention area for the e-SHE initiative. Interventions related to training of instructors, building digital studios, and developing policies and guidelines all intend to aid digital content development and delivery. The initiative thus invests in model e-courses that serve as a benchmark for instructors while developing e-courses online programs. The digital content will align with the national and international accreditation requirements for quality and standardization.

5) Institutionalization
Discussions with key partners including the implementing universities underlined the importance of the policy framework as an instrument for institutionalization and sustainability. As such, the e-SHE partnership invests in developing policies/guidelines that will cement the institutionalization of digital education across the 50 public universities. Among others, the policy/guideline will address issues related to: (1) digital education standardization, quality assurance, and accreditation, (2) information and data security, (3) intellectual property and/or copyright (4) instructors' digital skill development, certification, and incentive packages.

e-SHE Partners

FDRE Ministry of Education

The FDRE Ministry of Education (MoE) oversees all public universities in Ethiopia. In recent years, the ministry has been striving to enhance the quality and resilience of the higher education system by adopting digital technologies and building on the human resource base of universities. The e-learning program initiative was pronounced after the COVID outbreak, which revealed vulnerability to unprecedented scale. The e-SHE initiative is thus part of the strategy aimed at boosting the resilience of higher education in Ethiopia. In this project, the Ministry of Education is the owner and leader of the overall intervention. For more information on MoE, please visit: https://moe.gov.et

Mastercard Foundation

The Mastercard Foundation works with visionary organizations to enable young people in Africa and Indigenous communities in Canada to access dignified and fulfilling work. It is one of the largest private foundations in the world with a mission to advance learning and promote financial inclusion to create an inclusive and equitable world. The Foundation was created by Mastercard in 2006 as an independent organization with its own Board of Directors and management. Mastercard Foundation commissioned the e-SHE initiative and is working with partners for the implementation. For more information on the Foundation, please visit: www.mastercardfdn.org

Arizona State University (ASU)

Arizona State University (ASU) has developed a new model for the American Research University, creating an institution that is committed to access, excellence, and impact. ASU measures itself by those it includes, not by those it excludes. As the prototype for a New American University, ASU pursues research that contributes to the public good, and ASU assumes major responsibility for the economic, social, and cultural vitality of the communities that surround it. In the e-SHE initiative, ASU is responsible for customizing the online learning management system. It is also building the capacities of instructors and other key university staff for the utilization and management of the system. For more information on ASU, please visit: https://www.asu.edu/

Shayashone (SYS)

Shayashone (SYS) is a consultancy company that has specialized in project design and implementation, and policy and strategy development. The company has executed a number of large-scale multistakeholder projects in the agriculture and education sectors. SYS considers itself a social impact enterprise driven by a hands-on, bottom-up, inclusive, and partnership-oriented approach. In the e-SHE initiative, SYS will be responsible for the overall coordination and management of the project implementation. For more information on SYS, please visit: https://shayashone.com/

Contact us

e-SHE