

Online learning capacity building in Ethiopia

Solving the Global Learning Crisis podcast, text transcript

Welcome to this podcast series on solving the global learning crisis. We'll discover how Ethiopia, Nepal and Mozambique are reshaping their higher education programs in response to the changing demands of the 21st century. (Music playing)

Eila:

Hello and welcome to the podcast. I am Eila Burns and today I'm talking to Mr. Matiyas Teshome who is the local coordinator for the Capacity building for modernizing TVET pedagogy in Ethiopia, or in short MOPEDE, project. Welcome Matiyas!

Matiyas:

Thank you Eila, nice meeting you and I'm happy you are hosting me today.

Eila:

OK, let's start with you. Matiyas, can you tell us something about yourself? For example, what do you actually do, what's your work at the moment? And what is this project?

Matiyas:

Thank you Eila, my name is Matiyas Teshome and I'm a lecturer at the Department of IT in Ethiopian Technical University. The name of the institute was changed recently. It was formerly Federal TVET Institute.

I am also serving as ICT director of the university, with overall duties of ensuring all ICT infrastructure in services. There are many services, the ICT infrastructure that is serving the university. So my main job is ensuring that all these services and infrastructure are up and running for 24/7. And also, as you know, I'm the local coordinator of the MOPEDE project.

Eila:

Thank you very much. So yes, you are the local coordinator there in Ethiopia, but personally, why did you decide to work in this international project?

Matiyas:

This is a very interesting question. As you know, MOPEDE project focuses on building the capacity of teachers on the usage of digital learning tools, and also it focuses on digital pedagogy. It is about e-learning, and I personally feel that these issues were left untouched. They have got little focus in Ethiopia so far. Generally e-learning related issues, especially also the sector, we are working in the vocational sector, TVET sector. So this is true case in almost all government universities and higher education institutions in Ethiopia.

And we witnessed that also, when the COVID-19 crisis came, we proved that no one was ready digitally in higher education institutes in Ethiopia. So everything was totally stopped. So this international project tries to put its contribution improving these situations. So I am very much interested to work in this

project because I want to see improved utilization of ICT in education and in this case also it's focusing on TVET sector in a form of e-learning and blended learning.

So I am very much interested in participating in these things. Besides, this is also my first international project, and that is also a plus.

Eila:

Absolutely, so clearly sounds like you want to see improvement on sort of technology, technical development and the use of ICT within teachers. And this project is for vocational education and training teachers?

Matiyas:

Yeah exactly, it's a vocational... our university trains vocational teachers. I mean, the regular program focuses on training vocational teachers. Actually we have also trainers, I mean industry practitioners in the extension program.

Eila:

Very good. OK, the project has been now running for some months already, so what are the main activities that you are working currently in this this project?

Matiyas:

For example, there is an e-learning lab component, that is one thing. We will have an e-learning lab established. It will serve as a working place for instructor, who will be involved in this project as a pilot group, and also, it will be like a studio. So we're fulfilling instruments, materials for that lab. It's one component.

And we have already launched an e-learning platform, model, so that will be established and developed so that is the 2nd objective and aim. The other is a pedagogical competence of teachers and trainers. So that will be improved by using the digital pedagogic tools.

Also, as a fourth component will be developed the institutional support and management for the awareness of e-learning. These are the objectives and it involves the main campus that is Ethiopian Technical University and 5 selected satellite campuses currently.

By the way, we have about 15 regional campuses. There is a main campus in Addis Abeba, that is the capital city of Ethiopia. And there are 15 satellite campuses, but project currently has instructors from five of those 15 satellite campuses and different parts of Ethiopia. Eventually it aims to modernize education in ETU's 15 satellite campuses.

Eila:

Yeah, very interesting. Lots of tasks and activities going on. OK, you already said that currently you have the main university and five satellite schools or colleges that are working in the project at the moment?so that this?

Matiyas:

Yeah, these are like reach out pointers. This university is in the capital city and they are like colleges of the university. They are not newly established, they were polytechnics previously, so those polytechnics

are converted to be satellite colleges of this university. So they are like colleges, say, train at a degree label, first degree.

Eila:

OK, interesting. Did you say that at the end of the project you will have 15 of these satellite colleges within the project?

Matiyas:

Exactly, this project is a four year program, and we are on the first phase of the e-learning team training. These e-learning team trainers will be trainers of other trainees in the future, and those trainers will be from the different satellite campuses from the 15 satellite campuses.

Eila:

So how many teachers are currently involved in this stage? Do you have any figure?

Matiyas:

I know there are 20 e-learning team members from those five satellite colleges, and two of them are ICT experts, who are assisting them the other teachers. So this is the core group actually, but there are also about 10 supporting groups, including me and other important people in their project.

Eila:

Oh, very good. So you have a very good community there already of people who work in there, excellent. OK, I'm sure we will hear some of those little later on in these podcasts.

OK well, although we are at the very beginning now, you already mentioned a little bit about why you took part in the project, but as a person, what would you like to see as the result at the end of this project after four years? Is there something you would really like to see? You are sort of dreaming of?

Matiyas:

(laughing)

Yeah, maybe it will be too much optimist I guess, but I like to see blended learning and e-learning becoming the norm, the preferred way of teaching and learning at our universe. We are too far from that kind of culture currently. So after this project is completed I wish to see this blended learning and e-learning becoming normal teaching and learning practices, daily and normal activities in ETU and also in the satellite campuses in the different regions of Ethiopia.

Eila:

Well, let's hope the dream comes true. (laughing) We have few more years to work on that. Is there anything else you would like to add at this stage, anything else you want to tell about the project or about your work?

Matiyas:

It's a big project. It's a four year project. We are just at the beginning level of the project. I can see that it's going well so far in there. I hope it will proceed to meet the main objectives in the future. This is what I want to say, Eila.

Eila:

Lovely, thank you. Thank you very much Matiyas. I'm sure, at least I hope, that we can hear about your views and opinions more little later on in this podcast series. So thank you again, Matiyas.

Matiyas:

Thank you, Eila. I thank you very much for giving me the chance to be on your podcast and have a nice day, Eila.

Eila:

Have a nice day!

Podcast outro:

This podcast series is produced in the Higher Education Institutions Institutional Cooperation Instrument HEI-ICI program, with the support of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Music playing)



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