



National e-Learning Policy and Institutional Guideline Validation Workshop

Aug 15 - 16, 2023



In partnership with



Meeting Minute

📍 Radisson BLU Hotel, Addis Ababa

🕒 August 15 & 16, 2023

📋 Agendas:

- e-SHE Project Intervention Presentation
- E-learning policy validation workshop
- E-learning guideline validation workshop
- Baseline study
- Emerging issues from the discussion
- Way forward

1. Registration and Self-Introduction

The two-day workshop started with the registration and self-introduction of the participants, the institutions/organizations they represented and their roles and responsibilities led by Ato Yared Sertse, Manager of SYS, and the SYS team.

2. Keynote Speech

The two keynote speakers delivered an insightful speech on the role of technology in changing the life of our community, especially the youth in general, and transforming the educational system in particular.

Ato Samuel Yalew, Director of the Mastercard Foundation delivered the first keynote. His speech focused on the socio-economic demands of society and what the Mastercard Foundation is working on to meet these demands through the Young African Works Program. Ato Samuel stressed the need to enable youth to conquer their challenges and create opportunities. In a similar vein, the director addresses what is expected from stakeholders in the workshop to attain the above socio-economic demands via the application of digital technologies in every aspect of human life. stakeholders in the workshop to attain the above socio-economic demands via the application of digital technologies in every aspect of human life.



Dr. Zelalem Assefa's keynote, CEO for the ICT and Digital Education at the Ministry of Education, was also insightful and shed light on the purposes of the two-day workshop. Dr. Zelalem stressed the need to unlock the trends in digital education mainly the potential of students, faculty, and leadership via the application of the continuously emerging technology capabilities. This, according to Dr. Zelalem, will enable Ethiopian youth to have access to education as most don't have access so far. Along with the local problems in the education sector, Dr. Zelalem also shared insights on the global trends in the education sector specific to the applications of digital technologies. Apparently, he mentioned the need to:



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- Enabling the youth to have access to quality and relevant education (short and long term)
 - Starting micro-credentials to create immediate work opportunities for the youth.
 - Applying artificial intelligence and its potential in education so as to enable personalized learning that is targeted to enhance individualized learning and address differences in learning.
 - The penetration of mobile phones and their application in supporting learning
 - Increased demand for blended learning from the students, educators, and leadership
 - Demand for quality education and improved learning outcomes
 - Collaboration, partnership, and sharing of resources among educational stakeholders.
 - The changing trends in educational readiness indexes, especially digital education which is measured along the dimensions of:
 - Leadership-related factors,
 - Instructors-related factors,
 - Students-related factors,
 - Infrastructure-related factors such as connectivity and devices.

While concluding his speech, Dr. Zelalem mentioned that there is demand from stakeholders and the need to adopt global trends to address local challenges. As to him, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with stakeholders is working aggressively to overcome local challenges that have been identified previously such as connectivity, digital devices, standardizing digital content, and standardization of programs. However, what was missing was appropriating the environment so the above trends in education could be materialized in Ethiopia. That is the e-learning policy and e-learning guideline that can enable individual institutions to change their practices.

Given the above, the Ministry of Education expects the five Universities where digital/multimedia studios will be built to start online programs and the rest of the universities at least to blend their conventional classroom teaching-learning with digital education. The policy and guideline tools are among some of the commitments that the MoE is taking measures toward transforming the education sector and realizing Digital Ethiopia 2025.

3. Presentations and Discussion

i. e-SHE Intervention Presentation

The brief presentation by Ato Basiliyos, e-SHE Project Manager, highlighted the importance of changing the education practice supported by the Theory of Change for the e-SHE intervention. It included all the thematic intervention areas of the initiative: institutionalization of the intervention, infrastructure, capacity building, development of model digital courses, and project management. Basiliyos discussed the issues of the progress so far and in a way, the participants can have a takeaway from it. Specifically, he discussed the overall goals, plans, and achievements to date in all thematic areas.

ii. National e-learning Policy

Dr. Girum, a member of the consultants' team presented the e-learning policy. His presentation started with basic highlights of the existing situation followed by the themes for the e-learning policy. The policy was categorized into eight thematic areas, namely:

1. *Governance*
2. *Standardization, quality assurance, and accreditation*
3. *Instructors*
4. *Intellectual property rights*
5. *Student support and services*
6. *Infrastructure and user access*
7. *Information and data security*
8. *Resource sharing.*

The policy team has indicated that they have used baseline data reports of the MoE, desk review from national and international e-learning policies and strategies, and identified the gaps that need to be addressed under the above thematic areas. At the end of the presentation, a question and discussion session were given to the participants by the chairperson where many appreciated the draft document and provided useful input.

iii. e-Learning Institutional Guideline

Dr. Lemma, a member of a consultant the workgroup assigned for developing the e-learning guideline presented the e-learning guideline. The presentation was in line with the above eight thematic areas of the e-learning policy but with minor modifications categorized into ten focus areas:

- Governance and Structure
- e-Content Design and Development
- e-Learning Pedagogy
- Capacity Development
- e-Learning Environment
- Quality Assurance
- Acculturation
- Intellectual Property and Copyright
- Incentives/recognition
- Implementation

However, as this is a tool to be applied by the universities to implement the e-learning policy, it consists of detailed action implementations of the eight thematic areas. While proposing the action implementation recommendations, Dr. Lemma also shared the foundations of such recommendations.

Dr. Lemma also shared the foundations of such recommendations. In his presentations, Dr. Lemma shared the different national and institutional policies and guidelines reviewed, the additional data they make use of in addition to the results of the baseline study, and the global trends in digital education implementation.

iv. Baseline study

Ato Biruk, the consultant for conducting the work from e-SHE, presented the baseline study. Biruk has made a brief presentation on the status of e-learning in Ethiopian public universities. His presentation focused on the thematic areas presented by Ato Basiliyos and he tried to show the status and the challenges that the e-SHE initiative will face while progressing forward. He concluded his presentation with recommendations to manage the challenges.

- From the 36 higher education institutions, the number of higher education institutions that are connected to the EthERNet and who have their own data center infrastructures are low (11 and 26 respectively).
- Only one University has implemented an e-learning policy to govern e-learning implementation.
- There are different initiatives of e-learning at different universities with different scales showing the need for full-fledged e-learning intervention.

The participants commended the depth of the data collection but recommended future updating of the tools for additional similar data collection.



4. The role of various stakeholders in sustaining the implementation of e-learning initiatives

Mr. Yared Sertse from SYS has initiated a group discussion on the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders to sustain the e-learning program within and beyond the e-SHE project. Accordingly, the four groups working on two focus areas have summarized their reflection as indicated in Annex 1.

5. Emerging issues from the discussions

All presentations sensitized participants to bring their practices and experiences and relate them to the presentations. In addition to quick reflection after each presentation, feedback for the policy and guideline document has been provided either through WhatsApp group comments and/or thematized group discussion (five groups) and presentation of the group. Group discussions were made on the above eight thematic areas of the policy and guideline presentations. Following the group discussions, groups were invited to share their reflections on the two documents presented. Accordingly, there were positive reflections on the importance of the results presented and the validity of the outcomes.

- Many questions were raised regarding the governance and structure including the accountability of the e-learning management unit, major units and qualification of personnel, and linkage with other offices like the ICT unit, it was agreed detailed roles and
- Considering the existing university and national policies and legislations for the governance, structure, and benefits of the e-learning management unit.
- Giving attention to the Private Universities, polytechnic, and teachers' colleges while such life-changing initiatives are introduced.
- Mobilizing resources and resource-sharing culture.
- The need to plan how the e-learning initiative should be financed.
- The need to give attention to cross-border data flow, locally owned data centers/cloud/storage, and security.
- The need to place structural and personal accountability.
- The need to revise and standardize the baseline study tool, and upgrade it into a monitoring and evaluation tool for e-SHE interventions.
- Revisiting and clarifying the measurement factors that brought results showing baseline-like, mid-line, and end-line results from the baseline tool.
- Alignment of existing institutional and national e-learning and digital initiatives frameworks
- The need to indicate some key standards and guidelines required to implement e-learning initiatives.



Group Discussions

6. Way forward

The consultants agreed that they would compile the comments and disaggregate them according to e-learning policy and e-learning guideline issues with their expert reflections for further discussion on the solutions to be proposed together with the e-SHE team for Monday 21/08/2023. Submission of the two documents will be done once the participants have reached this agreement. Moreover, the e-SHE team has arranged a meeting session with Ato Biruk, the baseline study consultant, to discuss the issues raised and propose resolutions on critical points.

The two-day workshop was completed by forwarding a way forward from the participants followed by a closing remark given by Ato Tesfaye Negawo, delegate for Dr. Eba Mijena, CEO for Academic Affairs.

Finally, the participants came to a consensus on the following:

- The need to establish a national e-learning think tank group/workgroup/platform. Five participants volunteered to take part in this initiative (see Annex 2).
- The roles of stakeholders towards realizing the e-learning policy and guidelines
- The role of stakeholders in realizing the e-learning initiative in the country.

Ato Tesfaye's closing remark focused on the educational reform done by the MoE and how the e-learning initiative will be instrumental in realizing the national education reform. He suggested the commitment needed from the individual stakeholders and how the ministry is committed to transforming the education sector via implementing educational reform. Moreover, in his talk, he emphasized the value of such technological interventions to realize reform and change the lives of the educational community.



National e-Learning Policy and Institutional Guideline Validation Workshop Participants

Annex

**e-Learning for Strengthening Higher Education
National e-Learning Policy Validation Workshop
August 15&16, 2023 Radisson Blu Hotel**

Attendance Sheet, August 15, 2023

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