

UbuntuNet Connect 2021

**TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES:
RESEARCH AND EDUCATION SUCCESS STORIES
DURING COVID-19:**

**BLENDED LEARNING – BLENDED
COMMUNICATION AS INTRODUCED AT
AMBO UNIVERSITY, ETHIOPIA**

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Outline

- Situation in March 2020
- Challenges in a new Environment
- Teaching and Learning Experiments
- Search for the Missing Dots
- Ambo University
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Situation in March 2020

- The Ethiopian Ministry closed universities
 - Universities waiting for directions and guidance from the Ministry
 - Universities found themselves in a completely new situation.
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- Within a few days the MS Team was provided for all Ethiopian universities as the new university environment.

Challenges in a new Environment

- How to transfer the classroom situation into virtual reality?
- How to bring the meetings into the virtual meeting room?
- When will the Ministry provide guidelines about the handling of the new situation?

=> An empty space has been opened.

=> Every action in this new environment was an experiment.

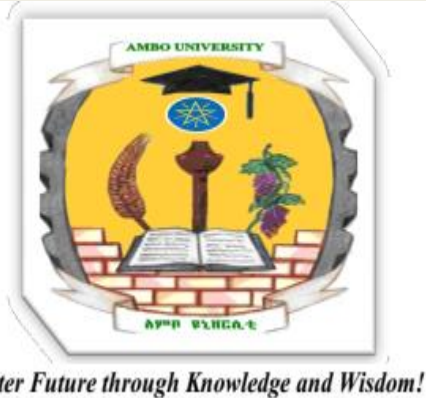
Teaching and Learning Experiments

- Lecturing in digital classrooms.
- Meetings in digital meeting rooms.
- Trial-and-error to find the suitable methodology to lecture and to talk in digital rooms.

Search for the Missing Dots

MoSHE	Universities	Staffs	Students	Community
No prepared guidelines in the Drawer	No clear strategies for disaster management	Lack of digital literacy skills and readiness	Total frustration and shock	Ethiopia was in turmoil

Ambo University



Ambo University (<https://www.ambou.edu.et>) is located 111 km away from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Campuses:

- the Main Campus,
- Hachalu Hundesa Institute of Technology Campus,
- Guder Mamo Mezemir Campus and
- Waliso Campus.

Number of students: 27000+

Number of lecturers: 5000+

- Since 2017 teaching digital literacy (Data/Software/Library Carpentries: <https://carpentries.org>).)
- Since 2018 using the National Academic Digital Literacy (NADRE) as national and institutional repository.

Source of Changes

- ⇒ Carpentry certified instructors from the Ambo University Waliso campus trained
 - ⇒ *Lecturers how to use the digital classroom for effective teaching*
 - ⇒ *Staff how how to use the digital meeting room for effective meeting*

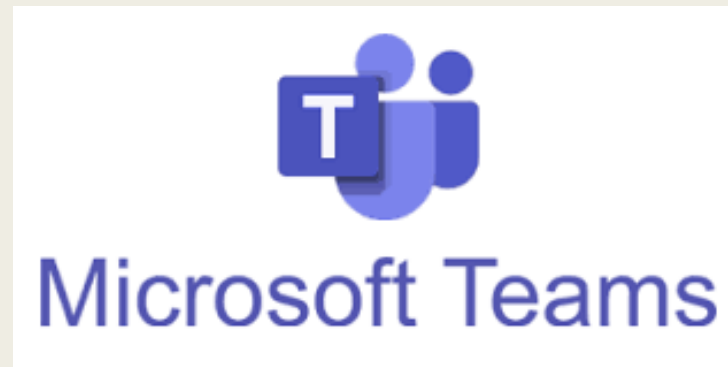
- => EthERNet/HESC trained staff in NADRE and NADL have trained Ambo University staff in the use of digital repositories and digital libraries.

Blended Communication

A try-out at the Ambo University Waliso Campus



NADRE and NDL At the rescue comes to give organized attention to existing resources and trends.



MS-Teams for all Universities and its educational tools:



The Carpentries Digital Literacy Trends

Challenges Observed

- *Push in the implementation of the Government Education Policy Roadmap that required ICT facilities and platforms for quality education as well as accessibility of learning resources for all students at any place, and time.*
- *Boost knowledge of digital literacy as well as remote teaching and learning skills for both - learners and educators.*
- *Provision of 24/7 accessibility of resources without (hardware) interruption.*
- *Introduce a business-like environment for students in view of self-organized learning environment as well as towards independent learners.*

What changed: The key elements of change

- ✓ *The use of the online resources provided through NADRE, NADL, MS-Team, The Carpentries*

NADL & NADRE platforms have pushed innovations at Ambo University that:

- *Lecturers get enabled to integrate the offered platforms in to the traditional teaching learning environment.*
- *The offered platforms have been successfully used as bridges to fill the gap of educators' absence from the learning environment.*

What changed: Teaching and Learning Environment

- ✓ Ambo University progressed very much in the implementation of the Government Education Policy Roadmap that required ICT facilities and platforms for quality education.
- ✓ Considerable increase in the knowledge of digital literacy as well as remote teaching and learning skills for both - learners and educators.
- ✓ The 24/7 accessibility of resources without (hardware) interruption has become state of the art and has created confidence in the work of the ICT-management, which also led to a wide acceptance of the platforms for further use.
- ✓ A business-like environment has been created for students in view of self-organized learning environment as well as in the support of independent learners.

What changed: University Staff

- ✓ Digital literacy workshops for Ambo University staff from teaching and administration was accompanied by feedback sessions in order to adjust the blended communication approach towards the needs of the users.
- ✓ Blended communication has become a tool for Ambo University teaching staff.
- ✓ The Ambo University management wants to role out the blended communication approach to all campuses and sectors of the university.

Conclusion

- At critical time in life COVID-19 has disrupted educational activities at Ambo University in the same way as in all Ethiopian universities.
- With the words of J. A. Schumpeter: there was the situation of a “creative destruction”. Overcoming the situation, Ambo University - the university itself, staff and students - has much more progressed than it would have in regular times.
- Digital literacy has widely spread among staff and students.
- NADRE has become Ambo University’s window to the world.
- Ambo University gets ready as an Ethiopian university to be seen and recognised globally.

Thank you

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