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2020 Learning Report

The Association for Faculty Enrichment in Learning and Teaching (AFELT) is a professional association for academic staff and other major players in higher education.

AFELT seeks to enhance scholarship of learning, teaching, and life-long learning for academic staff through collaboration with similar or complementary individuals and organizations. The Association does this by bringing together professionals in higher education and offers opportunity for the exploration of development initiatives that will promote the quality of learning in higher education in the region. For this purpose, we work with institutions closely linked with higher education, particularly in addressing the quality of learning and teaching.

AFELT therefore offers opportunities for professionals in higher education to network, research, and share best practice by providing a forum for capacity building.

Our vision is to be a transformational body for quality learning and teaching in higher education in East Africa. We are achieving this vision by facilitating professional development for academic staff in higher education.

Transformative learning

2020 has seen culmination of AFELT project on 'Transforming Employability for Social Change in East Africa (TESCEA). The project is a partnership between two Ugandan Universities, two Tanzanian Universities, INASP – a UK based international NGO, Ashoka and AFELT. 2019 helped in shaping a model that intentionally integrates critical thinking and problem-solving in the learning process. Through the project AFELT has had an opportunity to train ninety-six faculty from the four universities on redesigning courses to facilitate development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The universities were guided on developing collaborations with the industry and local communities to create learning space that promotes problem solving with a gender focus to ensure equal representation of both male and female in the learning process.

In 2020, we started by defining the East African Model for developing these critical skills and problem solving skills and documenting the pedagogical patterns that are emerging in this process.

We are also glad to say that the training of multipliers for this project shifted to online during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. The first cohort of multipliers is still being trained on how to facilitate online classes.

Our members have been facilitating the training for the four universities: University of Dodoma and Mzumbe University in Tanzania, Gulu University and Uganda Martyrs University in Uganda.



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Covid-19 Pandemic: How has it affected learning in Kenya? How has AFELT been able to address these issues?

Upon the lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic, AFELT shifted to online convenings amongst the members. The scheduled conference was put on hold as we explore the possibility for a conference in 2021. The members have however engaged on discussions on effective learning approaches in the Covid-19 season.

The Covid-19 pandemic put our universities at a limbo. But we are glad that quite a number of our members from the private universities had been prepared and were able to shift to online learning within two weeks. Our public universities were however unprepared institutionally to shift to online and have been struggling over the last three months to facilitate learning. Departments or individuals continued the learning with their students but not as an entire institution. There was laxity in adopting blended learning in the past which made it difficult to support learning as the institutions were closed.

AFELT conducted a survey among its members to find out what their greatest need was during the pandemic. All indicated Assessment: how do we facilitate authentic assessment for our students remotely? Between May and June, our members have been conducting different forms of assessments for their students.

Training: AFELT provided online induction on the use of zoom for effective facilitation of learning during the pandemic. How best to ensure students engagement for both synchronous and asynchronous learning.

Personal Development: We had a session to debrief with members on “Self-Care” in the pandemic. The platform allowed sharing of stories among the members on how they are coping with the lock-down at both personal and professional level and how best to use the time for learning.

AFELT has also linked the members to opportunities to learn from various networks.

Challenges

Remote Support for Students: The gaps existing among the students have emerged during this pandemic. There are students who are unable to participate in online classes due to various factors such as being able to afford the bundles for online learning, lack of access to internet, having a laptop or even a smart phone etc. These are challenges that have affected the implementation of online learning for many institutions.

Assessment: how do we design assessments that are authentic and promote learning in blended learning? How do we ensure that students appreciate assessment as a tool for developing their competences and not just as a grade?



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