



DEVELOPING THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND TALENT OF YOUTH TO FURTHER FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

The following case study was received as a result of a call issued by the Committee on World Food Security for case studies highlighting examples of initiatives aimed at 'Developing the knowledge, skills and talent of youth to further food security and nutrition'. The cases received provide the background for a discussion of lessons learned and potential policy implications at a special event on October 15th, 2015 during CFS 42. Find out more at www.fao.org/cfs/youth.

Case study: Agreenium Online University

Location: Global

Partner: Indian Ocean Commission

Challenges:

- Lack of scientific and technical knowledge among professionals for the development of sustainable agriculture.
- Lack of access to scientific, technical and professional training among young people.

Perspectives:

- The development of a partnership policy for the production and dissemination of shared or complementary digital training between Northern and Southern countries.
- Securing IT infrastructures in developing countries.
- Progressive adaptation of content/teaching methods and knowledge dissemination tools to digital technologies.

Background

The convergence of developments in digital technologies and increased international access to higher education and vocational training has led to the rapid development of highly effective digital educational platforms in Northern countries, with a view to winning over learners on a global scale. Given this context, in 2014 the French Agricultural, Veterinary and Forestry Institute (Agreenium) launched a digital university in the agrosocieties, which will bring together the training/education products of the entire French system for agricultural research and education. One of its distinctive features is the inclusion of international partners in the design and dissemination of training in order to cover the differentiated training needs of learners in the North and those in the South.

Challenges

The challenges facing Agreenium's Online University are, on the one hand, access to scientific, technical and professional training for young people unable to learn in formal education systems (for

reasons of distance, cost etc.) and, on the other, participating in the construction of a skills ecosystem in countries seeking to support the development of sustainable agriculture in order to increase food security.

Approach Used

The approach used is an institutional partnership between the French agricultural training system (which ensures initial and ongoing training in France in all agricultural, environmental and food professions, from certificates of professional competence through to PhDs) and training systems in partner countries, in this case the countries of the Indian Ocean Commission (Madagascar, Comoros, Seychelles, Mauritius, France) and South Africa. The partnership concerns the joint building and managing of a digital learning offer, chosen for its strategic importance for the country's development and its technical and educational feasibility.

The process comprises four steps:

- The identification of training needs per country which can be translated into a digital offer.
- The launch of pilot operations.
- The introduction of training programmes which can reinforce the capacities of priority groups.
- Adding value to the training system by adapting the training offer which has been constructed for other countries showing an interest.

Outcome and Impact Achieved

The project is being developed with the Indian Ocean Commission, which has already selected the project as one of its strategic priorities for the period 2015-2020.

The project is aiming to produce 10 training courses, half in higher education (engineers, researchers and technicians) and half in vocational education (farmers and technicians). Once the 10 training courses are up to speed, we envisage that the annual number of learners for the six countries involved will be in the order of 100,000.

The first experience will begin on September 2015 with the Mooc "Agroecology" :

<https://www.france-universite-numerique-mooc.fr/courses/Agreenium/66001/session01/about>

Lessons Learned/Opportunities for Scaling-Up

This approach is designed to meet the growing need for training in various developing countries. However, training courses should take into account local specificities, both in terms of the training content (agroecological and cultural contexts) and in the teaching methods (the language used, support for learners, the need to mix virtual and face-to-face teaching etc.). Provided the project is designed with an adaptive capacity, enabling training courses to be tailored to specific local needs, it is easy to envisage the dissemination of training courses in countries other than those for which the project was initiated.

Policy Implications

Such a project is only possible if the IT infrastructure is sufficiently developed and secure to be able to provide training which combines online and offline learning. The current rapid development of IT infrastructure in Southern countries augurs well for the operational capability of digital education in many countries in the short term.

In addition, the digital transition of education simultaneously produces a transition in teaching approaches, which implies the need for a supportive policy for trainers and teachers so they can easily integrate digital technology into their teaching.

Finally, this project only has a future if a policy of partnership in the production and dissemination of shared or complementary digital training between North and South is developed, as the use of digital training will only become a reality if teachers from different countries are associated with training courses from their conception.