



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

Benchmarking of Technology-Enabled Learning at Alupe University



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The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to promote the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources, and technologies.

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Introduction and Background

Benchmarking is an important tool to compare and make deliberate progress in any field of human endeavour. For integration of technology for teaching and learning, this is relatively a new field. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) promotes the use of technology-enabled learning (TEL) – also referred to as “digital learning” - for improving access to and quality of education and training in the Commonwealth. The approach has been to support policy development, improve institutional capacities and technological infrastructure to leverage the potentials of TEL. The process follows three-phases systematically – (i) Preparation, (ii) Development and (iii) Maturation.

Benchmarking is part of phase three, which indicates that the educational institution has taken steps to implement TEL in a systematic manner and is ready to take the next leap to continue the cycle of development. As such, the process of benchmarking is important, where it is expected that the institution as a whole participate, and the activities are validated by external experts to provide guidance and advice. Therefore, it is as much an internal exercise as an external validation activity.

This report presents the findings of the TEL benchmarking carried out at the Alupe University, Kenya during September - November 2024. It provides an overview of the methodology, the validated self-study report and an action plan developed by the Alupe University team.

COL Support at Alupe University

Alupe University is a public university in Kenya. The vision of Alupe University is to be a world-class University that is committed to achieving academic excellence, integrity and quality research. Alupe University’s mission is to create, evaluate, apply, preserve and share knowledge in a free, open and inclusive environment of intellectual inquiry, for the betterment of society. Its Philosophy Statement is to educate to empower the mind and develop competencies through teaching, research and community outreach by integration of technology, sciences and the social sciences for the total growth of graduands. Alupe University has 3,100 students enrolled and 45 teaching staff.

COL has been supporting the Alupe University since May 2022 for the systematic three phase implementation of TEL. In the phase 1, a baseline study report¹ was completed based on which Alupe University developed a TEL policy. In phase 2, staff members have been trained on developing as well as facilitating blended courses. These have resulted in development and offer of several blended courses to students at Alupe University. A report² on the impact of TEL at Alupe University is also available. In the phase 3 COL supported Alupe University is further strengthening TEL through more course development and benchmarking of TEL.

Process and Methods

Once Alupe University agreed to use COL’s *TEL Benchmarking Toolkit*³, COL engaged an experienced Consultant to support the University remotely and validate the self-study report. A

¹ <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4990>

² <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5575>

³ <http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/3217>

brief description of the process followed is given below. It may be noted that in contrast to the advice in the Toolkit to use two experts for the validation process, this report used only one expert engaged by COL. This was due to the cost to Alupe University of using a peer institution in Africa to support this process.

Alupe University nominated 22 staff members to work on the ten domains of the *Toolkit* with representation by both men (13) and women (9) (Annex-A).

The activities during the Benchmarking exercise had five distinct stages:

- A. Setting-up processes and documentation: The Consultant discussed and agreed with the key contact at Alupe University regarding the protocols of sharing and copying emails. An online storage and collaboration space was created to share the data and reports coming from the 10 domain teams. The Consultant also introduced the three-phase benchmarking process to the members of the benchmarking team through a ZOOM meeting facilitated by COL on September 17, 2024.
- B. Self-review: This was carried out by the team members and their reports with evidence shared via the online storage and collaboration space.
- C. Validation of self-review: This was carried out by the Consultant. In the process, several queries were made to provide additional information, and the Consultant moderated the scores, where the evidence provided were not sufficiently justifying the scores or aligned with the rationale.
- D. Action Plan Development: A draft three-year action plan was prepared by the teams, and the Consultant interviewed nominated key stakeholders (Annex-B) to discuss the Action Plan and Self-Review. The key contacts at Alupe University attended the interview and consolidated the feedback. Annex-C presents key actions that are needed to make Alupe University a strong TEL implementing institution.
- E. Closing and reporting: The Consultant finally presented the findings in a ZOOM session with the senior management and team members of the TEL Benchmarking team on November 21, 2024.

Validated Self-Study Report

COL's TEL Benchmarking Toolkit has ten domains to ensure that a base level of quality practices is present. Each of the benchmarking domains contains four to six performance indicators (PIs). Inherent within the PIs is the understanding that an institution may score well in one and not in another, but that this information is then used as a stimulus to improve in certain areas.

The benchmarking domains are:

1. Policy
2. Strategic Plan
3. IT Support
4. Technology Applications
5. Content Development
6. Documentation
7. Organisational Culture
8. Leadership
9. Human Resource Training

10. Technology-Enabled Learning Champions

Figure 1 the consolidated scores of the 10 domains of TEL benchmarking at Alupe University.



Figure 1: Ten dimensions of TEL Benchmarking at Alupe University

Policy

Score: 3.75

Description: *The existence of a TEL policy provides direction for the use of technology in learning and teaching. It can be known by other names, such as an eLearning Policy, but its focus is to integrate technology in teaching and learning.*

There is a TEL policy developed for the institution with COL support. The TEL policy vision advocates for enhanced quality of teaching through integration of technology while the University vision is to achieve academic excellence. The TEL mission advocates for enhanced quality of teaching and learning through integrating technology while the University mission is about creating and applying knowledge in an inclusive environment of intellectual inquiry. There is good alignment between TEL policy and University's vision and mission. The lecturers and learners are putting in use the vision and mission of the TEL policy by integrating use of technology in the teaching and learning process. This is also evident in the digitized learning content that the lecturers have developed and put on the learning management system (LMS).

There is commitment by university management to advocating for blended learning where lectures are supposed to be both physical and online. The University has also put in place a Moodle LMS where lecturers can upload their digitized lecture content.

Strategic Plan**Score: 2.5**

Description: *The strategic plan ensures the commitment to TEL is implemented in a time-bound manner.*

There is a TEL strategic plan which forms part of the University strategic plan. TEL activities are fully supported by senior management. TEL goals are to digitize lecture content which is gradually being achieved. There is financial provision for the development of the installation of the LMS.

IT Support**Score: 3.83**

Description: *The IT support department or a similar department is responsible for a centralised or decentralised approach to providing infrastructure support in the institution.*

All technologies for teaching and learning are procured under the recommendation of ICT directorate, installed and maintained by the ICT directorate. This is evident in the TEL policy where all the technical issues and trainings are performed under the guidance of the directorate since currently, there is no ODeL directorate.

The University ICT policy is well established and aligned to the needs of the organisation. It highlights the application and maintenance process of different technologies used within the University. The Director, ICT reports to the Vice Chancellor of the University and is leads the appropriate ICT use at the University.

The IT support department is responsible for the overall functioning of all the technologies within the University. The TEL duties are also being handled by the IT support team as stipulated in the TEL policy. There is an ICT committee team appointed by the Vice Chancellor of the University, though the team is not actively overseeing the ICT policy implementation.

Technology Applications**Score: 3.0**

Description: *Appropriate technologies are deployed for teaching, learning and assessment as per standard academic practices.*

The lecturers have laptops for preparing of lecture content. There are several projectors for displaying lecture content in the classrooms. Almost all learners have smart phones which they can use for accessing digital learning content. The lectures and learners can access appropriate software both for office work and learning. There is a LMS in place which is used for teaching and learning. There is an Enterprise Resource Planning system within the University (Intranet) used for conveying personal information to the learners. The University has 300mbps Internet bandwidth which helps access external content and resources for the students and teachers. There is a data protection in place to govern how data is handled within the University.

Content Development**Score: 2.5**

Description: *Availability of both infrastructure and human resource support for digital content development is crucial for effective TEL implementation.*

There is need to have a studio to produce audio-visual content and interactive multi-media

resources. Lecturers basically do their recordings using their own resources leading to creation of low-quality content.

There is no instructional designer in the University, however, a training workshop is held annually to train lecturers how to design, develop and organize learning content. COL support has been instrumental in enhancing the skills of the teachers in blended course development. The use of open educational resources to develop lecture content is at the discretion of the lecturer. There is no policy/guidelines in place related to use of open educational resources.

Documentation

Score: 2.75

Description: There is adequate documentation in the form of guidelines, handouts, and manuals available (online/offline) for use by the stakeholders.

There is a content development guide attached on the homepage of the LMS guiding lecturers. The lecturers are often supported by the ICT team on how to use technology in teaching. There is a student guide on the LMS login page to guide the students on how to navigate the LMS. Training sessions are regularly organised for students to support them how to use technology for their studies. The lecturers are supposed to fill a blended course design template before uploading the content on the LMS.

Organisational Culture

Score: 2.75

Description: The organisational culture supports and fosters innovation, teamwork, learning and sharing to strengthen TEL.

The faculty members have been action in integrating technology in teaching and learning despite their busy teaching schedule. The lecturers do peer teaching on how to use different technologies in teaching especially when their colleagues have issues with using TEL. Some lecturers have digitized their lecture content and uploaded on the LMS. The uploaded content can be used by any other lecturer. The University has embraced blended learning as a mode of teaching and learning. The lecturers have adopted the creation and integration of YouTube videos to enrich their lecture content.

Leadership

Score: 3.0

Description: Leaders in the organisation are enthusiastic about TEL and support an evidence-based approach to decision making in relation to technology adoption.

Leaders in the University have always supported the implementation of TEL by approving training sessions to take place within working hours. Resources like the LMS have been put in place by the leadership as a way of supporting TEL implementation. The training sessions have always had one of the senior management members in attendance.

The Senior Management approved the TEL policy which encourages use of TEL in content delivery. The leadership has demonstrated active support for blended learning. By virtue of the leadership staff are motivated to undergo training and use TEL to achieve their academic goals.

Human Resource Training

Score: 3.0

Description: Human resources are treated as key in delivering quality teaching and learning using technology. Staff training to strengthen the adoption of TEL is a regular feature in the institution's professional development programmes.

With COL support over 50 teachers at the University have been trained in the appropriate use of TEL. Training programmes are also organised by the ICT staff as stipulated in the TEL policy. There is no department designated to develop the capacities of the teaching staff. However, teachers are positive about the scope of the training available at the University. The IT staff members are highly skilled and trained in the field of computing to provide support to teaching staff members.

TEL Champions

Score: 2.25

Description: The existence of a group of teachers to champion TEL initiatives helps create a supportive environment for the adoption and scaling up of different technologies.

There is a group of lecturers who can be termed as early adopters by virtue of their willingness to be trained in content development. There are TEL champions who support pedagogical innovations by virtue of their willingness to take part in the three phases of TEL training to upscale their skills. The current TEL policy was designed and developed by lecturers within the University. However, very few lecturers research and disseminate good practices in TEL.

Key Observations from the Report

The overall score of 2.93 on a scale of 5 shows that Alupe University needs to increase the quality and effectiveness of TEL in several key growth areas. The TEL benchmarking team at Alupe University thus identified several recommendations in the Action Plan (Annex-C) to make further progress with TEL implementation. There is also good buy-in to these from the senior leadership at Alupe University.

The report also shows that the ICT support and having a policy are strength of Alupe University, though it also needs a policy or guidelines on using open educational resources. The key recommendations of the Action Plan (Annex-C) related to areas that need more focus are:

- Strategic Plan
 - Implement the TEL strategic plan
 - Allocate funds to support TEL
 - Establish and staff an ODeL directorate.
- Content Development
 - Set up a studio for creation of digital multimedia content.
- Technology-enabled learning (TEL) Champions
 - Look for different innovative ways and good practices to digitize lecture content and disseminate the information to other lecturers.

Annex-A: The Alupe University Benchmarking Team

Domain	Name	Gender
Policy	Dr. Bostley Asenahabi	Male
	Dr. Charles Omoga	Male
	Mr. Oure	Male
	Ms. Catherine Mwikali	Female
Strategic Plan	Mr. Tobias Okumu	Male
	Dr. Arnety Makokha	Female
	Mr. Kenneth Korkoren	Male
	Mr. Johnstone Milimo	Male
IT Support	Ms. Anne Sogoli	Female
	Dr. Boswell Owuor	Male
	Mr. Chebii Kiptanui	Male
	Mr. Oure	Male
Technology Applications	Dr. Bostley Asenahabi	Male
	Mr. Kimei Stephen	Male
	Dr. Boswell Owuor	Male
	Ms. Margaret Ngugi	Female
Content Development	Mr. Tobias Okumu	Male
	Ms. Concilia Ogombo	Female
	Ms. Catherine Mwikali	Female
	Ms. Gladys Ogaro	Female
Documentation	Ms. Anne Sogoli	Female
	Mr. Albert Mwangula	Male
	Mr. Kimei Stephen	Male
	Ms. Margaret Ngugi	Female
Organisational Culture	Dr. Bostley Asenahabi	Male
	Mr. Kevin Omondi	Male
	Ms. Peruce Atingo	Female
	Mr. Kenneth Korkoren	Male
Leadership	Mr. Tobias Okumu	Male
	Mr. Kevin Juma	Male
	Dr. Sarah Bundotich	Female
	Mr. Kevin Omondi	Male
Human Resource Training	Dr. Titus Muhambe	Male
	Mr. Albert Mwangula	Male
	Ms. Anne Sogoli	Female
	Ms. Peruce Atingo	Female
TEL Champions	Dr. Charles Omoga	Male
	Mr. Kevin Juma	Male
	Ms. Gladys Ogaro	Female
	Mr. Johnstone Milimo	Male

Group leader in bold

Annex-B: Interviews conducted by the Consultant

On November 11, 2024, the Consultant interviewed Prof. John Changach, Deputy Vice Chancellor around the question of whether there were any unexpected findings in the self-review spreadsheet and in the Three-year Action Plan.

The key contacts at Alupe University, Dr. Bostley Asenahabi and Mr. Tobias Okumu consolidated the feedback to the teams.

Annex-C: Alupe University TEL Three-Year Action Plan 2024 - 2027

Important:

1) *These are some of the key actions identified by the Alupe University staff.*

2) *All figures estimated are not reviewed/verified.*

Note: the actions under the 10 domains are listed in priority order

	From When (month and year)	By when (month and year)	By Who (human resources)	With what resources (technical and monetary)	Indicators of success (quantify where possible)
1. Policy					
a. Ensure full implementation of the TEL policy	January 2025	June 2027	Director ICT/ DVC ARSA/ VC	Financial – KSh. 5,000,000 Technical – ICT Staff	No. of Lecturers (45) and Students (3100) using the E-Learning platforms
b. Review ICT policy once in 3 years	January 2025	June 2027	Director ICT	Technical – ICT directorate members	Reviewed policy
c. Develop appropriate policy/guidelines for use of open educational resources (OER)	January 2025	January 2026	DVC AFD and DVC ARSA	Technical – ODeL staff (when recruited)	Policy/guidelines developed.
2. Strategic Plan					
d. Implement the TEL strategic plan	January 2025	June 2027	DVC AFD and DVC ARSA	Technical – ODeL staff (when recruited)	Strategic plan document
e. Continuously develop and upload E-Learning content	January 2025	June 2027	DVC ARSA	Financial – KSh. 1,000,000 Technical – subject matter experts	Number of courses digitized and uploaded on the LMS (60)
f. Allocate funds to support TEL	January 2025	June 2028	DVC AFD	Financial – KSh. 10,000,000 (spread across 3 years)	University budget
g. Establish and staff an ODeL directorate	January 2025	June 2028	VC, DVC AFD, DVC-ARSA	Technical – Instructional designer, Multimedia designer	1 Director ODeL, 1 instructional designer, 1 multimedia designer, a studio
3. IT Support					
h. Increase number of ICT technical staff	January 2025	June 2027	VC	Financial – 2,500,000 (salary per year)	Increase staff by 1 instructional designer, 1 multimedia designer, 1 lab technician
i. Increase No. of computers for students and staff	January 2025	June 2027	VC/ DVC ARSA/ DVC AFD/ Director ICT	Financial – KSh. KSh. 1,000,000	Number of computers increased by 100 pieces
4. Technology Applications					
j. Increase automation of university processes, e.g. use of e-portfolio	January 2025	June 2027	DVC AFD/ Director ICT	Financial – 1,000, 000	Increased use of software like e-portfolio, digital content management system
k. Increase internet bandwidth and Expand WiFi hotspots on campus	January 2025	June 2027	DVC-AFD, Director ICT	Financial – KSh. 1,300,000	Increased internet bandwidth from 300 mb/s to 500 mb/s

	From When (month and year)	By when (month and year)	By Who (human resources)	With what resources (technical and monetary)	Indicators of success (quantify where possible)
					No. of WiFi access points from 28 to 38
l. Conduct online examinations	January 2025	June 2027	DVC-ARSA, DVC-AFD	Financial – KSh. 3,000,000 annually Technical – ODeL staff when the Directorate is established	Online examination Examination marks from the online examination
5. Content Development					
l. Set up a studio for creation of digital multimedia content	January 2025	June 2027	DVC-ARSA, DVC-AFD	Financial – KSh. 2,000,000	A studio Digitized teaching videos
m. Documentation					
n. Documentation of TEL workflow processes about the people, resources and steps	January 2025	June 2027	ICT Dept until ODeL staff recruited		Documented process
o. Develop a TEL feedback mechanism	January 2025	June 2027	ICT Dept until ODeL staff		A feedback mechanism
6. Organisational Culture					
p. Organize internal conferences on TEL	January 2025	June 2027	DVC-ARSA		Conference publications
q. Encourage lecturers to share their experiences with colleagues and use TEL	January 2025	June 2027	DVC-ARSA, Director ODeL (when recruited)		Increased No. of lecturers integrating technology in their teaching
7. Leadership					
r. Give relevant support to lecturers while implementing TEL	January 2025	June 2028	VC, DVC-ARSA, DVC-AFD, Director ODeL (when recruited)	Financial – KSh. 10,000,000 (spread across 3 years)	University budget
8. Human Resource Training					
s. Personalized staff capacity building on content development, delivery and management	January 2025	June 2027	ICT Director until Director ODeL recruited	Technical – lecturers for specific courses	Increased No. of developed courses.
t. Regularly train lecturers how to access, use and contribute towards OERs	January 2025	June 2027	ICT Director until Director ODeL recruited	Technical- ODeL directorate staff	Use, contribution towards OER resources
9. TEL Champions					
u. Look for different innovative ways and good practices to digitize lecture content and disseminate the information to other lecturers	January 2025	June 2027	Director ODeL (when recruited), TEL champions	Technical – Instructional designer, Multimedia designer, lecturers for specific courses	Increased lecture content digitization



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