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China announces edX platform to power its new online learning portal XuetangX

Posted by Matt Rocheleau October 10, 2013 11:00 AM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

China announced Thursday it will launch an online learning portal powered by the open source platform edX, the Cambridge-based collaborative education nonprofit founded last year by Harvard University and MIT.

The announcement comes one week after the French government announced it would adopt the edX platform, becoming the first country to do so.

“Access is one of our primary drivers and this will help broaden access worldwide,” said Johannes Heinlein, senior director of strategic partnerships for edX. “We’re really excited about others using our technology as a solution to help expand educational opportunities.

“Many other countries are looking to provide educational access using our platform,” he added, but declined to name the other countries because those plans are not yet finalized. “We really see this as the trajectory going forward.”

Countries and other entities that adopt the open source edX platform can make their own improvements and customization to the technology.

In China, the massive open online course and blended learning portal XuetangX will feature courses from a consortium of nearly a dozen universities, led by Tsinghua University in Beijing.

“The institutions that have joined together today are among the leading universities in China with a long history of offering the highest quality education,” said a statement from Anant Agarwal, president of edX, who attended an announcement of XuetangX in Beijing alongside representatives from the Chinese Ministry of Education and Tsinghua University president Jining Chen.

“Their choice of the edX open source platform for XuetangX is a vote of confidence in our global partners’ efforts to build a world-wide movement to improve education,” Agarwal added.

The first courses will launch on Oct. 17 on XuetangX, which will be independent from edX.org.

In France, more than 100 higher education institutions will participate in a new national online portal there called [France Université Numérique](#), which will use the edX platform, but will also be separate from edX.org.

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The first 20 courses will be launched at the end of October and will start in January, the French Ministry of Higher Education [announced last week](#).

The edX nonprofit is comprised of 29 institutions worldwide, or the xConsortium. EdX.org, which features about 70 courses, boasts nearly 1.5 million users from 192 countries. About 70 percent of users hail from outside the US. EdX.org users have combined for more than 2 million course enrollments since it launched in May 2012.

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