the Singapore

WAY

Redesigning the State

Redesigning the State: Case-Based Learning at Addis Ababa University

1. Context Snapshot – *A Captivating Story*

- City Name: Addis Ababa
- Country: Ethiopia
- Population: 5.4 million
- Year of Launch: 2024

In the lecture halls of Addis Ababa University, a quiet crisis had been brewing for years. Policy students recited frameworks from memory, rarely questioning them. Aspiring civil
servants memorized constitutions without touching the raw material of actual governance. The state was treated like an abstract model—detached from reality, immune to imagination.

This disconnection was not just academic—it mirrored a national problem. Ethiopia's young leaders were navigating state fragility, regional tensions, and rapid urban growth with limited practical tools. They were being trained to replicate the past, not redesign the future.

Then, Professor Hanna Bekele, head of the Public Policy Innovation Lab, asked a bold question: What if we taught the state as a living, designable system—through stories, experiments, and failure?

Thus began a radical shift—an experimental curriculum rooted in the principles of The Singapore Way, reimagined through local case-based learning.

2. LOCAL LEADER'S Vision Statement

"We teach the law. We study the constitution. But if we want to redesign the state, we must first teach students how to *see it*—in its contradictions, in its street corners, and in its silence."
— Prof. Hanna Bekele

3. 10 Lessons from The Singapore Way Adapted to the City

Singapore Strategy	Local Adaptation
Visionary Leadership	**Students create future-state scenarios for real ministries**
Pragmatism	**Classes analyze past reform failures using actual government memos**
Multiracialism	**Cases reflect regional identities, from Tigray to Oromia**
Education as Nation-Building	**Reframed public policy education as civic engineering**
Innovation Ecosystems	**Students partner with civic tech startups to redesign public services**
Rule of Law	Mock parliaments simulate legal reforms and constitutional crises
Inclusivity	Rural students co-develop case narratives with professors
Long-Term Planning	Introduced "2050 Statecraft Lab" to anticipate next-gen governance
Smart Governance	Digital dashboards used to map inefficiencies in local administration
Public Engagement	Case co-authorship with citizens impacted by real policy decisions

4. The Local Plan

- Name of Initiative: Statecraft Studio Addis
- Objectives:
  - Replace theoretical instruction with real-world governance cases
  - Bridge academia and government through immersive learning
  - Empower students to become public sector designers, not just analysts

- Key Design & Policy Tools:
  - Cross-ministry fellowships for final-year students
  - Digital platform for real-time feedback on student policy prototypes
  - "Failures File" repository of anonymized policy flops as learning tools

5. Implementation Framework

Phase	Activities	Duration	Stakeholders
Phase 1	Co-develop local governance cases with alumni and civil servants	4 months	Ministries, AU alumni network
Phase 2	Embed case-based method in 6 core courses	6 months	Faculty Senate, curriculum board
Phase 3	Launch open-access Statecraft Studio portal	3 months	MoE, civic tech partners
Phase 4	Annual Public Governance Hackathon	Ongoing	Students, local NGOs, diaspora advisors

6. Outcomes & Impact (18–24 Months)

- Quantitative:
  - 12 new locally grounded cases published and peer-reviewed
  - 350 students completed real-time policy simulations with gov't partners
  - 5 policy ideas from the studio adopted by city-level bureaus

- Qualitative:
  - A student team redesigned the public complaints system in Addis using WhatsApp
  - Pastoralist students created land tenure case simulations now used across 4 regions
  - Female students led a mock policy redesign of Ethiopia's maternal health rollout

7. Challenges Faced & How They Were Overcome

Challenge	Solution or Mitigation
Faculty skepticism of non-traditional methods	Hosted immersive "teach-the-teachers" simulation retreats
Limited access to real government data	Negotiated anonymized data partnerships with ministries
Student fear of failure	Made failure a core design principle—celebrated failed case ideas in exhibitions
Political sensitivity	Created a "red-line" ethical board to vet all case topics before use

8. LOCAL LEADER'S Reflections

"Singapore didn't teach us how to copy. It taught us how to experiment—boldly, honestly, and together. That's the state our students are now learning to build."
— Prof. Hanna Bekele