

African educators see Covid-19 as 'an opportunity' - survey

eLearning Africa and EdTech Hub released the results of its survey, 'The Effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on African Education' today. It revealed that 50% of surveyed African teachers, trainers and education technology specialists think the Covid-19 pandemic will turn out to be a "significant" or "very significant" opportunity for African education.



Photo by August de Richelieu from [Pexels](#)

The results show that many African educators are opportunistic about the future. They believe that Covid-19 has served as a “wake-up call,” which will encourage greater use of blended learning and new forms of technology assisted education and training in the continent’s schools, colleges and universities.

The survey is based on interviews with more than 1600 education and technology professionals across Africa, who were asked about their experience of the Covid-19 pandemic and its implications. 85% of respondents thought that the use of technology would be more widespread as a result of the crisis. As the African Union, among others, considers that technology is the key to the rapid expansion of education and thus to future economic growth, this is clearly good news.

One respondent, Joice, who has worked in technology and education for over 20 years and believes in the “fundamental role in society” of educational technologies said: “We have the opportunity in the face of the pandemic to improve the uses and access to technologies aimed at learning, at a time when students and teachers can become protagonists of a new model of education.”

Isso of Burkina Faso, a teacher, believes it is precisely the difficulty of the current crisis that will ultimately create real, long term benefits: “As the Covid-19 becomes a worldwide problem with no good solution, everybody in the world becomes involved in seeking solutions for their own survival that will lead to creativity, new ideas and new opportunities and part of evolution.”

And, from industry, corporate planner Sisu of Zimbabwe said: “This is the opportunity for a long-term evolution of the education system.”

Disadvantages

The survey also pointed, however, to considerable nervousness about the development of a digital divide and a rise in inequalities among learners because of uneven access to technology. Respondents felt that learners in rural communities were most likely to be disadvantaged as a result of a lack of access to technology. They also felt that connectivity was the biggest obstacle preventing the development of more technology assisted learning - specifically, a lack of available and affordable connectivity.

Overall, respondents reported that school closures had been widespread across Africa (95% said that all schools in their countries had been forced to close) and, whilst this had had many negative consequences, 92% said they thought the closures were essential. However, the survey showed that most educators received no financial support for tools to help them continue teaching in the crisis, and felt that they had insufficient preparation to adapt to the demands of distance learning.

Suitability of technology

The survey also pointed to the effectiveness of different technologies at different levels, with television and radio seen as working well at the primary level and online learning at the secondary.

eLearning Africa Director Rebecca Stromeier said that the survey showed that there was “plenty of evidence of ingenuity and innovation at all levels in many countries” in responding to the crisis.

“The crisis has been a real challenge for Africa but it has not, by and large, been the catastrophe that was predicted. Africans have used the technologies available to them to carry on teaching and learning. People have learnt from this crisis and they know how important technology now is to education.”

To download the survey, visit: <https://www.elearning-africa.com/survey-COVID1>

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