

Stellenbosch University launches new e-learning platform for high school students

By [Shan Raddiffe](#)

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Access to quality education is key to addressing the inequalities and bridging the learning gaps hampering South Africa's education landscape. In a step toward improving such availability, Stellenbosch University (SU) recently launched SU Advantage, an online learning and teaching solution focusing on supporting high school learners and teachers in Grade 10, 11 and 12 (Further Education and Training Phase or FET).



Dr Benedict Khoboli, director of the Stellenbosch University Centre for Pedagogy (Suncep)

SU Advantage, which can be accessed from any smart device, combines short, effective learning content with live interactive educational support focused on the most important topics that learners need to understand to improve their comprehension of lessons taught in class.

The platform's educational support is not only easily accessible but also focuses on 11 school subjects:

- English Home Language
- English First Additional Language
- Mathematics
- Mathematical Literacy
- Accounting
- Business Studies
- Economics
- Geography
- Life Science
- Physical Science
- Tourism

These subjects are offered in English and comprise short-form video lessons, topic-based assessments and quizzes, consolidated workbooks, memo-based reconciliation and in-depth live lessons.

Supplementary, not substitute

SU Advantage is not an online school, but rather an online supplementary education tool. It is not meant to replace mainstream schooling, but rather enhance key concepts that learners have been exposed to in a traditional classroom.

Spearheading the initiative is Dr Benedict Khoboli, director of the SU Centre for Pedagogy (Suncep). "Educators are under increasing pressure to improve pass rates and learner performance. However, the reality is that resources are limited, and classrooms are simply too full to accommodate the needs of all learners," he says.



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The content and resources developed for the platform have been created in alignment with generally accepted pedagogical principles, Khoboli explains. "All resources available on the platform have been created by experienced educators, who are teachers that have excelled in their teaching careers. Simply put, the learning material available on SU Advantage is of high quality and designed so that it ensures a holistic understanding on the side of learners."

While SU Advantage is a supplementary learning platform aimed at students, Khoboli says, "Teachers can certainly incorporate SU Advantage in their lesson planning. In this sense, teachers might advise learners to use SU Advantage to deepen their comprehension of certain topics that learners usually find challenging. In summary, teachers can use SU Advantage as an aid in their educational toolkit to further support their learners."

Live lessons

Students are able to join scheduled live lessons without having to confirm attendance or book a slot, as space is unlimited.

"SU Advantage is fully scalable. This means that any number of learners can attend live lessons at the same time," Khoboli explains. "Learners can simply log in and join a live lesson - there is no need to pre-book to watch a specific session. All live lessons are recorded and placed on SU Advantage so that learners who could not attend live are able to still peruse the content at any time post the scheduled time of the session."

Data considerations

One of the biggest setbacks to the advancement of online learning in South Africa is the lack of connectivity and the high cost of data. Khoboli says that this factor was greatly taken into consideration during the development of the platform.

"Although SU Advantage is not yet zero-rated on any local network, we are in talks with service providers to ensure that SU

Advantage can be zero-rated in the future. With that being said, SU Advantage was specifically developed in such a way that it is data-light. Therefore, learners can expect that SU Advantage is efficient when it comes to data consumption.

"SU Advantage also works with donors who make funds available to enable the platform to be offered to schools and learners who do not have access to the resources required to subscribe to SU Advantage," Khoboli continues. "As part of our funding options, donors can include devices to access SU Advantage, as well as data plans to enable learners to use SU Advantage at no cost of their own."



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Additions and expansion

Khoboli and the SU Advantage team have no plans on stopping here.

"We've made it our mandate to make tertiary education a reality for more South African youths. By providing foundational support to high school learners in the senior phases of their educational journey, SU Advantage can help them to improve their chances of getting accepted into tertiary learning institutions."

SU Advantage offers a range of career guidance tools, which effectively assist learners in getting a bird's eye view of exactly what is required of them to pursue their dreams. These tools include online aptitude tests, which are seamlessly integrated with the university's available courses so that learners can get a clear sense of the fields of study best suited to their personality and school performance.

While SU Advantage currently caters to Grades 10, 11 and 12 in English, there are additions in the works. "We are looking into rolling out learning content in other languages, like isiXhosa and Afrikaans. We are in the process of making more subjects on SU Advantage," Khoboli confirms.

Registration and partnerships

Parents and learners can register to use SU Advantage by visiting www.suadvantage.co.za.

At the same time are, the business community and private donors also invited to partner with Suncep to help them grow the community of FET learners from schools with limited resources to access SU Advantage and thereby democratise educational support in South Africa.

ABOUT SHAN RADCLIFFE

Shan Radcliffe is the editor of Bizcommunity HR, Education and Legal.

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