eLearning: The Panacea for the negative effects of COVID-19 on Higher Education Institutions in East Africa Region, or is it?

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An institution of the East African Community (EAC).

A regional economic community established by a Treaty

**Partner States**

Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, DR Congo & Uganda

- Advise Partner States on matters higher education
- Facilitate networking among universities in EAC
- Quality assurance and harmonization of higher education curriculum in the EAC
Vision
High-quality education in sub-Saharan Africa that enables young people to achieve their ambitions and strengthens society

Mission
Our mission starts with universities and colleges, using data and evidence to drive a dramatic improvement in education for young people

Aligned to SDGs: Quality Education and Decent Work, and Africa Union Agenda 2063
Motivation for the study

The COVID-19 pandemic has left no aspect of modern life untouched. It has created an unprecedented test on the rigidity of higher education systems across SSA.

IUCEA partnered with ESSA to conduct a survey in 2021, to understand the impact of the pandemic on HEIs.

This study is an extract from the survey data with a focus on eLearning

• Assess the experiences of HEIs, students and faculty in using eLearning platforms during the pandemic
• To develop strategies to improve teaching, learning, and assessment in emergencies
Methodology

- Survey data was collected using an online tool (SurveyMonkey) from 134 HEIs in EAC.
- Survey participants: students, faculty members, MOE officials, and HEI regulators.
- Data was collected between 12th April and 14th June 2021
- Overall, we had 1,658 responses with 52% completion rate
- Enough responses for a statistical relevant analysis at regional level.
Survey respondents’ distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Completion rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty member</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC/ Principal</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic registrar</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOE official</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulator</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Distribution of students**

- Diploma: 75.78%
- Bachelor’s degree: 15.60%
- Master’s degree: 4.16%
- Postgraduate Diploma: 4.01%
- Doctoral degree: 0.45%
TRANSITIONING TO ELEARNING
The experience of HIEs in EAC
39.13% of private and 18.18% public HEIs were able to immediately transition to eLearning.
45% of private HEIs and 20% of public HEIs have managed to transition over 90% of their academic programs into eLearning.

36.4% of private HEIs and 20% of public HEIs have managed to transition over 90% of their students into eLearning.
Factors hindering the transition to eLearning

We did not have an ODeL policy in place. We needed to have our online resources accredited by our regulator. We did not get immediate clear guidance from our regulators. We did not get proper guidance from our governing council. We did not have an eLearning platform in place. We did not have the financial resources to invest on eLearning platform. We did not have staff with the technical knowledge to guide us in the transition to online. Most of our students lacked skills, internet connectivity, equipment to transition to eLearning. Most of our staff lacked skills, internet connectivity, equipment to transition to eLearning. Most of our students were reluctant to move into eLearning. Most of our faculty were reluctant to move into eLearning.

There was a general lack of digital and virtual infrastructure, policy, and skills to transition to eLearning.
TRANSITIONING TO ELEARNING

The experience of students and faculty in EAC
Most faculty members were of the view that eLearning required more time compared to in-person teaching.

Most students (62%) think eLearning has created inequalities in learning (digital divide).
Students’ experiences (Deep dive)

- Students spend more on internet bundle
- There is little support for student to access good internet
- Training support for learners
• Unreliable internet, inadequate eLearning skills, and ICT equipment were the major concerns for faculty members
• There was some institutional support for faculty members to conduct eLearning
Students find it difficult to do exam online due to unstable internet.

Faculty members believe that student lack the necessary skills to do exam remotely.

Only 18% of students indicated that they lack the skills to do exam remotely.

Both students and faculty members agree that it is difficulty to uphold integrity in online exams.
Outlook on the mode of learning in the future

- Generally, student prefer the future mode of learning to be blended.
Outlook on the mode of learning in the future

- Faculty members recommend blended learning to be the future of education
Conclusion

• HEIs in the EAC region showed resilience in transitioning to eLearning
• There is a general lack of digital and virtual infrastructure and delayed adoption of technology-supported solutions for online learning.
• Access to the internet (cost and quality) is a major hindrance to eLearning in the EAC region
• There is a general concern about the integrity of online exams among students and faculty.
• Blended learning is the preferred mode of learning for both students and faculty members.
CALL TO ACTION

Online learning and assessment
Key discussion points

• How can the private sector/industry and the government support HEIs to mitigate the cost of ICT infrastructure and internet access?
• How can HEIs collaborate to mitigate the cost of eLearning?
• How can HEIs in EAC improve remote assessment?
• What are the pros and cons of proctored examination?

Approximately 97 percent of higher education students in SSA—roughly 750,000 people—had their studies abruptly distrusted.
Thank You