ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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The impact of Covid on eLearning courses in Africa

eLearning Africa shows some errors in the management of Covid in the education sector, but creative solutions are also coming from the school.

That the spread of Covid would have meant a catastrophe from the point of view of health and education in Africa, was a fact feared by the **African Union** and other international bodies. According to a survey conducted by e**Learning Africa**, a network of professionals involved in technology and education, the impact of Covid in Africa was limited compared with other continents and even where it hit, the catastrophe from an educational standpoint that many people expected did not occur. Instead, according to most of the 1,600 professionals interviewed, **opportunities** have arisen in the use of technology and, in particular, eLearning in African schools.

Covid in Africa: and consequences for education

The report " The effect of Covid-19 on education in Africa" reveals some key data on the impact that the health emergency has had so far on education:

- 97% of those interviewed stated that their school has been closed because of Covid
- Access to education has been limited by the **technological barrier** in primary and preschool students
- Teachers have also had difficulties due to lack of public funds for the purchase of technological tools and **training on distance learning**.

Despite closed schools and limited access to technology and training, solutions were found that were age-appropriate.

The classroom school has been replaced by **educational programs for television and radio**, with a focus on primary students, and **online courses** for high school students.

Covid as an opportunity for eLearning in Africa

85% of people who responded to the survey have no doubt: Covid represents an opportunity for the **development of eLearning in Africa**. There is a lot of confidence in measures that renew the educational fabric of the various African countries and concretely push for the adoption of **technology** as an engine for **development**. One interviewee from Zimbabwe sums it all up in one sentence: "Technology is the future". Even in countries like Sierra Leone, where there are difficulties in **accessing electricity and the internet**, an old technology serves the cause of education: radio.

The result, according to expectations, will be a greater diffusion of platforms for online learning, **LMS** and the development of distance education.

Online courses in Africa: the risks

Despite positive expectations, 74% of respondents warned of one of the major risks associated with the **digitization** of schools: the growth of **inequalities**. Without adequate support from the authorities, the most vulnerable families risk being excluded from **distance learning**, precisely because of the lack of the basic technology required: PCs, laptops, mobile devices, internet connection.

The vulnerability of some strata of the population is a cross-cutting risk that ranges from technology leaders such as the United States to states with great infrastructural deficiencies.

What solutions for distance education in Africa?

As the report highlights, eLearning is a response to school closures along with the use of traditional media such as TV and radio for educational purposes. To ensure maximum penetration and reduce inequalities, eLearning in Africa should focus on:

- **lowtech** technological solutions
- courses in **offline** mode
- **community centers** for internet and computer access

Despite initial concerns, the closure of schools in Africa due to the Coronavirus is perceived as an opportunity to increase the spread of eLearning on the continent, provided that the electrical system and the spread of the Internet are strengthened and **learning solutions are adopted via smartphones**, offline and community centers, all without forgetting the educational potential of TV and radio.

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