COVID-19 Higher Education Response

Higher Education in Africa: Challenges and Solutions through ICTs, E-Learning, Distance Education and Digital Inclusion.

Date: Thursday, 14th May 2020 - Time: 11h00 (Abuja)/ 12h00 (Paris)/ 13h00 (Nairobi)

Organized by: UNESCO Regional Offices: Abuja (Nigeria) and Nairobi (Kenya)
Context

Higher education is at a crossroads. In addition to the multiple challenges it must face, such as: climate change, Artificial Intelligence, Education, massive unemployment among young people and peace and security in Africa, there is now an unprecedented health crisis with its devastating repercussions in the world. This health crisis is about to create the most serious economic crisis of the same level as the Great Depression of 1929 according to experts\(^1\).

Africa is the continent least affected during the same time frame as other countries outside the continent, because its populations have not had much contact with the hotbeds and epicenters of the pandemic, such as China, Europe and the United States. In addition, the pandemic arrived in Africa with a delay of three months, in comparison to the rest of the world.

African States however, are among the 191 countries of the world to have enforced nationwide closure of schools and educational institutions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. With the widespread closings of schools and universities following the COVID-19 crisis, the education sector and more specifically, higher education has taken a forced turn to view technology as an alternative to face-to-face instruction. African States and African universities, much like the rest of the world, were not prepared for this situation but due to poor investments, are now facing multiple crises at the same time, where weaknesses have been exposed in various sectors, all of which overlap: health sector, education sector, the economy, and a poorly funded science sector, or research & development. The stress on the education and university systems are unprecedented, and risk undermining the gains made in achieving SDG4, the primary enabler of all the other SDGs, from preschool to higher education.

No crisis has ever created so much damage to education systems worldwide in such a short time. Faced with this unprecedented situation, UNESCO launched a Global Coalition of Partners for a worldwide response to COVID-19, including major UN and international organizations, the private sector and digital giants\(^2\), which have all agreed to work together to help education systems reduce risks and work towards greater resilience in the face of indefinite closures and disruptions to education in the future.

Recession, unemployment ... Sub-Saharan Africa, already fragile, will bear the brunt of the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, even if the continent is still little affected in terms of health\(^3\). With a total population estimated at 1.2 billion, whose demographic projections predict a doubling by 2050, African youth\(^4\) represents the greatest asset of the African continent. Around 420 million young people aged 15 to 35 in Africa, most are unemployed and hold precarious jobs, mainly in the informal sector. At the same time, 35% of young women are neither employed nor trained, compared to only 20% of men. One of the levers to be used to deal with massive unemployment

\(^1\) [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/replay-radio/le-mot-de-l-eco/](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/replay-radio/le-mot-de-l-eco/)
\(^2\) [https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/globalcoalition](https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/globalcoalition)
\(^4\) AfDB, Jobs for Young People in Africa, Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, April 2017.
among young people is Education and Technical and Vocational Education Training. In this regard, the webinar aims to raise issues and examine the interactions between TVET and Higher Education, and the continuity of learning

**Webinar issues and topics**

Knowing that the risks of school and university failures are higher, during the COVID-19 period, in the short, medium and long term, how do higher education and scientific research plan to face this new crisis?

- What online education strategies can be implemented in such a short time to save the 2020 academic year, given that Africa ranks among the bottom tier of countries with respect to Internet availability and affordability\(^5\).
- What lessons have been learnt over the COVID-19 school closures, and what types of innovative schemes are recommended for the future success of higher education systems, and skilled instructors and academics to avert protracted disruptions?
- Education has been largely underfunded in Africa, with education financing largely dependent on households, rather than on State funded cost-free basic education. What must change in order to guarantee access to higher education for current and future generations?
- Will COVID-19 widen the digital divide between the rich and the poor on the African continent?
- What measures should be adopted to meet the immense needs of students with respect to being equipped with the basic computer hardware and software tools essential for the operationalization of online courses in Africa, and without worsening issues of inequity both within countries and between countries on the African continent?
- Most countries in Africa have an existing infrastructure to provide education through traditional radio and television. Which technologies are most viable for higher education in the immediate and medium term for the completion of the academic year for already enrolled students?
- How can universities ensure the continuity of courses in universities and colleges without compromising access, quality, and equity while preserving inclusion in higher education? This includes students with disabilities?
- How to revitalize TVET opportunities at higher education levels while strengthening linkages between the world of work and education and training systems? What contribution can African Higher Education make to mainstreaming and prioritizing TVET in secondary schools? How to attract the participation of girls and young women towards TVET related professions?

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Objectives

This webinar dedicated to higher education, TVET and the network of African experts in digital education will:

- Share good practices and recommendations for continuity of learning/training through ICTs/digital solutions including radio and TV.
- Ensure the continuity of courses and examinations in higher education and TVET institutions leaving no one behind (equity and inclusion).
- Mobilize partners in the context of the Global Coalition for Education, to ensure continuity of learning/training in higher education and TVET institutions.

Expected results

- Sharing of good practices.
- Recommendations for the continuity of courses in African universities and TVET institutions.
- Concrete technological solutions for the successful implementation of E-Leaning at higher education and TVET institutions in Africa.
- Strengthening partnerships for continuity of learning/training during and post-COVID-19.

Participants

- Academics, Rectors, Presidents and senior staff of Higher Education Institutions, ICT companies, International Organizations, Professors, Experts in digital education, IT Service Providers, Private Sector, Specialists, Students.

Language

This webinar will be held in two languages

- **English**, **Thursday 14th May 2020**.
- **French**, **Tuesday 19th May 2020**

Technical requirements & duration

- Webinars to be held on **Microsoft Teams/ 2 hour Sessions**
# Agenda

**Thursday, May 7, 2020**  
*(11:00-13:00 Abuja Time; 12:00-14:00 Paris Time; 13:00-15:00 Nairobi Time)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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| 11:00 – 11:30 | Introduction & Moderation  | Ydo Yao, UNESCO Regional Director for West Africa  
ADG/PAX, UNESCO, Headquarters.  
ADG/ED, UNESCO, Headquarters. |
| 11:30 – 11:40 | Goodwill message  | • Prof. Amado Leopoldo, Commissioner, Education, Science and Culture, ECOWAS.  
• Prof. Etienne Ehile E. Secretary General of African Association of Universities (AAU) |
| 11:30 – 11:40 | Keynote address  | Dr. Mahama Ouedraogo, Director of Human. Resources, Science and Technology, HRST, AUC. |
| 11:40 – 11:45 | Sub-Regional/ Country Experiences | **Cameroon**  
Prof. Belay Kassa, Rector.  
Pan African Virtual University E-University (PAVEU): "strategies and perspectives for anticipating crises related to online learning" |
| 11:45 – 11:50 | Sub-Regional/ Country Experiences | **Ivory Coast**  
Prof. Tiemoman Kone.  
Director General of Virtual University of Ivory Coast  
"The response of the Virtual University of Côte d’Ivoire to COVID-19" |
| 11:50 – 11:55 | Sub-Regional/ Country Experiences | **Kenya**  
Mwenda Ntarangwi  
CEO Commission For University Education (CUE), Nairobi |
| 11:55 – 12:15 | Q & A                             | Google  
Huawei  
Weidong  
Facebook  
Microsoft  
UNESCO IITE  
UNESCO ICHEI Category II Centre  
Commonwealth of Learning (COL)  
CDNETWORKS  
HBMSU  
StarTimes Group |
| 12:15 – 12:55 | Partners interventions          | Google  
Huawei  
Weidong  
Facebook  
Microsoft  
UNESCO IITE  
UNESCO ICHEI Category II Centre  
Commonwealth of Learning (COL)  
CDNETWORKS  
HBMSU  
StarTimes Group |
| 12:55 – 13:00 | Closing remarks                 | Ann Therese Ndong-Jatta, UNESCO Regional Director for Eastern Africa |