

GOLA!

GLOBAL ONLINE LEARNING ALLIANCE



REPORT ON SECOND GOLA VIDEO CONFERENCE – 28 APRIL 2020



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Section 1. Format & Participants

1.1 Introduction	04
1.2 Format of Video Conference & this Report	04
1.3 Participants	05

Section 2. Discussion

2.1 Abstract of Key Findings	08
2.2 Overviews from around the world	09
2.3 ICTs & Digital Learning	10
2.4 ICTs & Digital Learning – “How Might We?”	12
2.5 Teaching, Pedagogy & Assessment	13
2.6 Teaching, Pedagogy & Assessment – “How Might We?”	15
2.7 Policy, Planning & Cooperation	16
2.8 Policy, Planning & Cooperation – “How Might We?”	18



FORMAT & PARTICIPANTS

SECTION 1.

Format & Participants

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of the Global Online Learning Alliance (GOLA!) is to bring together government ministries of education and ICT, civil society, and industry solution providers to serve the global community during such a prolonged period of school and university closures. Our first online video conference took place at the beginning of April to hear the challenges and efforts to find solutions in response to the worldwide school closures due to COVID-19 and the necessity to ensure continuous education.

The participants spoke of a few common themes from their immediate experiences of school closures around the world. These include the support of health, safety and well-being of students and parents; ICT infrastructure; partnerships and funding; the quality of learning and its key components of content, assessment, teacher development and communications. To maintain schooling the fundamental challenge is to ensure the preservation of the pedagogical link between teachers and students. The ICT infrastructure, its capacity, usage, and responsiveness is now being truly tested; in most countries the state of unreadiness has been exposed.

The key unanimous statement was that any actions and policies must have long-term consideration and accordingly governments and civil society must view such responses in terms of national resilience.

Accordingly, picking up on the key issues raised around the delivery of content, ICT infrastructure, e-learning platforms, teacher training and importance of the pedagogical connection between learners and teachers, the 2nd GOLA video conference addressed: **Practical ICT for Education Policies: Short-Term Solutions & Long-Term Frameworks**

Each participant was encouraged to produce “how might we” statements to reframe the challenges into opportunities.

1.2 Format of Video Conference & this Report

In section 1.3 we list the participants of the second GOLA! video conference. The most immediate



lesson of online conferencing is to ensure that every participant has a voice. Small groups are essential.

There were 53 participants and so the video conference was structured to ensure that the bulk of the time was dedicated to small break out groups – giving everyone their voice. The following was the conference structure.

Part A: Opening statements: Four opening statements were given by European Schoolnet, US State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA), Arab League Educational, Cultural & Scientific Organisation (ALECSO) and the World Bank Group.

Part B: How Might We exercise - Short-term Solutions: Break into moderated break-out rooms of 4 or 5 people per room

Part C: Summary: Moderators summarising key points raised during the “short-term solutions” discussion.

Part D: How Might We exercise - Long-Term Frameworks: Break into moderated break-out rooms of 4 or 5 people per room

Part E: Summary and Close: moderators summarising key points and an open floor for closing discussion

The total time of the video conference was 120 minutes

After introducing the participants in 1.3, the format of this report is structured around the issues and not individual attributable quotations. The participants hold senior positions in education & ICT from multiple countries across Europe, Middle East, Africa, North America, Australasia and LATAM countries.

In section 2.1 we give an abstract of the key findings of this second GOLA! video conference and the remainder of the report further examines these issues according to the experiences of the conference participants.

1.3 Participants

We would like to thank all those for participating and providing such wonderful insights. This group of participants is a cross-section of people on the front-line of education around the world:

- Pedro Sebastião Teta, Executive Director Sovereign Fund & former Secretary of State for ICT, **Angola**
- Jim Knight, Chief Education Officer TES & Former Schools Minister, **UK**
- Claudia Costin, Senior Director for Global Education, World Bank Group, **Brazil**
- Marc Durando, Executive Director, European Schoolnet, **Belgium**
- Elarbi Imad, President, Centre for Civic Education, **Morocco**
- Mohamed Jemni, Head of ICT for Arab League Educational, Cultural & Scientific Organisation: **ALECSO**
- Peter Muzawazi, Chief Director, Junior, Secondary & Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Primary & Secondary Education, **Zimbabwe**
- Deeqo Godah, Senior Advisor to Minister of Education & Higher Education, **Somalia**
- Phil Lambert, University of Sydney & Former GM for Curriculum & Assessment, **Australia**
- Inas Sobhy, E-Learning General Director, Ministry of Education, **Egypt**
- Christine Niyizamwiyitira, Head of ICT for Education, Rwanda Education Board, **Rwanda**
- Johan van Wyk, Head of ICT for Education, Ministry of Education, **Namibia**
- Martyn Beckett, Special Advisor to the Ministry of Education, Ontario, **Canada**
- David Njengere, Advisor to Minister & Head of Curriculum, Ministry of Education, **Kenya**
- Pascal Cotentin, Academic Inspector, Ministry of Education, **France**
- Lourino Chemane, Advisor to Minister and CEO of National Research & Education Network, **Mozambique**
- Christine Fox, Deputy Executive Director, State Educational Technology Directors Association, **USA**
- Fernando Valenzuela, Managing Partner, Global Impact EdTech Alliance, **Mexico**
- Nathalie Terrades, Mission Head for Digital Education, Ministry of Education, **France**
- Stanley Kanovengi, ICT for Education Administrator, Ministry of Education, **Namibia**
- Philippe Ajuelos, Director of Digital Transformation, Ministry of Education, **France**
- Bart Verswijvel, Senior Advisor, European Schoolnet, **Belgium**
- Ehrens Mbamanovandu, National Professional Officer, Education Sector, UNESCO Office, **Namibia**
- Mirian Cecilia, Head of International Project Management, Ministry of Education, **Spain**
- Goodwill Chademan, Deputy Director of ICT & E-Learning, Ministry of Primary & Secondary Education, **Zimbabwe**
- Leonor Stejpic, CEO Montessori Group, **UK**
- Manolo Roja Mata, Director, Ministry of Education, **Costa Rica**
- Cesar Herrero, Pedagogical Advisor, National Institute of Educational Technology, Ministry of Education, **Spain**
- Adam Horvath, Division Director, Centre for Digital Pedagogy & Methodology, **Hungary**
- Nicolas Delbar, Project Coordinator, Wallonia-Brussels Federation General Administration of Education, **Belgium**
- Sami Faruqi, Manager Social Infrastructure, Islamic Development Bank, **Saudi Arabia**
- Jawara Gaye, Lead Education Specialist, Islamic Development Bank, **Saudi Arabia**
- Muzahid Ali, Senior Education Specialist, Islamic Development Bank, **Saudi Arabia**
- Faisal Al Jehani, Education Specialist, Islamic Development Bank, **Saudi Arabia**
- Abdurahman Ali Mohamed, Office of Minister of Education & Higher Education, **Somalia**
- Katariina Salmela-Aro, Professor at University of Jyväskylä, **Finland**
- Maurice Nkusi, Professor, Namibia University of Science & Technology, **Namibia**
- Marcus Mbambo, Professor, University of **Namibia**

1.3 Participants

- Blanca Heredia, General Coordinator, Interdisciplinary Program on Educational Policy & Practices, **Mexico**
- Samira El Keffi, Coordinator, Wallonia-Brussels Federation General Administration of Education, **Belgium**
- Youssef Maiga, Senior Project Officer, Association for Development of Education in Africa, **Cote d'Ivoire**
- John Abbey, COO, Montessori Group, **UK**
- Kagendo Salisbury, Strategist, Cambridge, **UK**
- Michelle Guzman, Projects Coordinator, INICIA, **Dominican Republic**
- Jennifer Adams, CEO, Educating Leaders Consulting & Former Director of Education, Ottawa **Canada. Moderator**
- Jane Mann, Managing Director, Cambridge Education Partnerships, **UK. Moderator**
- Patricia Vázquez del Mercado, Radix Education, **Mexico. Moderator**
- Giancarlo Brotto, Founder, Catalyst, **Canada. Moderator**
- Mário Franco, Founder, Millennium@Edu Sustainable Education, **Portugal. Moderator**
- John Glassey, CEO, Brains Global, **UK. Moderator**
- Claire Urie, Head of Government Relations, Brains Global, **UK. Moderator**
- Maria del Huerto Pini, Advisor to the Government of Santa Fe, **Argentina. Moderator**
- Adam Collis, Cofounder & Director of Innovation, Catalyst, **Hungary. Producer**

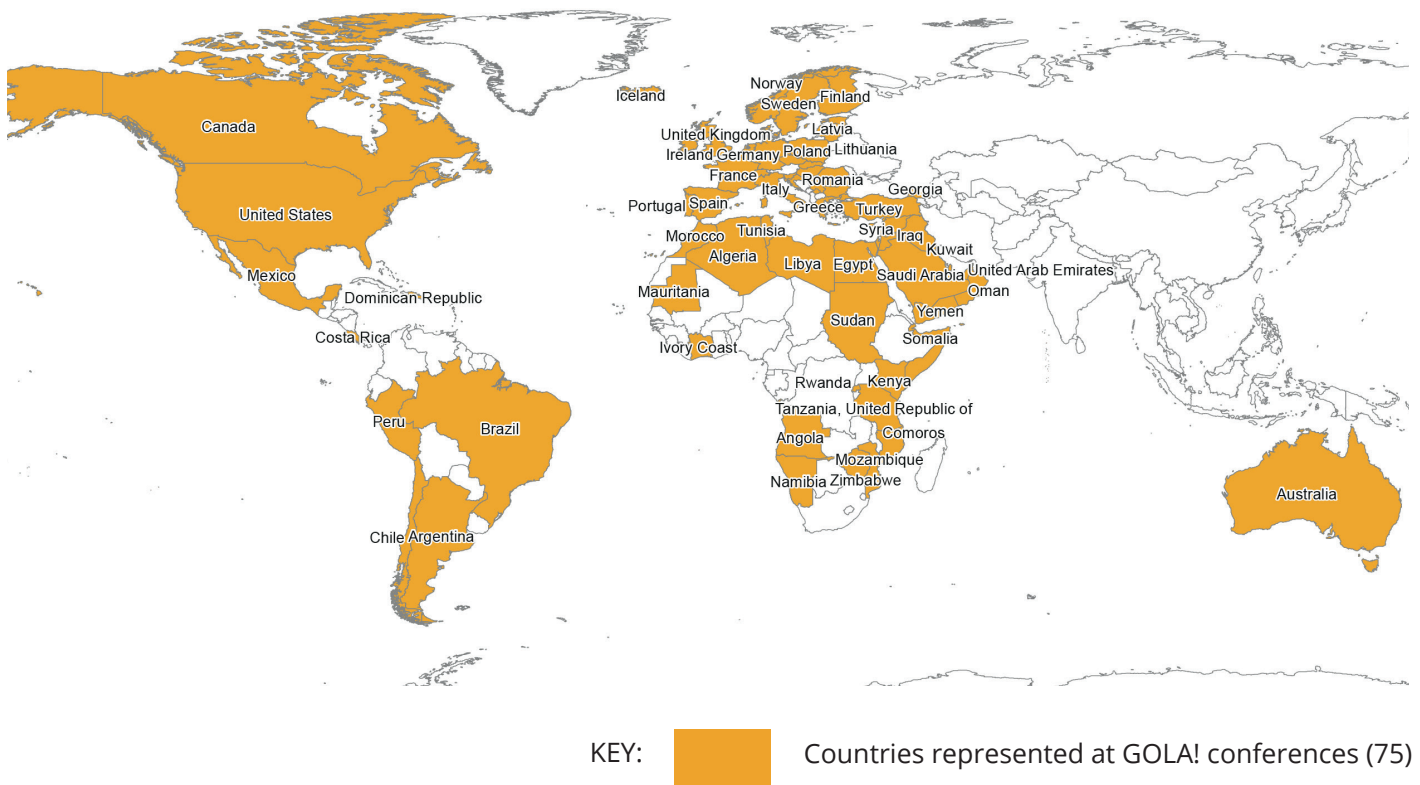


Fig 1.1: Map of participating countries in April's video conferences. Source: GOLA team, Mexico



DISCUSSIONS

SECTION 2.

Discussion

Here we present an abstract of the key findings, a summary of opening statements and a breakdown of the key discussion areas by subject matter, bearing in mind the overlap between issues and the necessity to retain an overall holistic view of education and teaching. Each section is closed with a series of “how might we” questions to engender the spirit of collaboration and for policy makers to take action.

Although the video conference was split into short-term actions and long-term policies, for the purpose of this report it is the issues that take centre stage.

2.1 Abstract of Key Findings

After a few weeks into the continuing impact of COVID-19 being felt by the education sector worldwide and as of end of April, school closures still affecting 72% of the world's student population (source: UNESCO), a number of common themes are shared by educators and policy makers. For both short-term continuity and long-term sustainability:

ICT & Digital Learning: the need for substantial ICT infrastructure investments sits alongside the current healthcare & economic priorities of governments worldwide. The danger of a digital divide has never been more apparent. Concerns over cyber-security for children are paramount

Teachers & Pedagogy: continuous professional development and embedding of blending learning into teacher training. New innovations in pedagogical development

Policy, Planning & Cooperation: policy makers are now collaborating more with counterparts, initiating school surveys & starting to think about new definitions of learning and schooling

Assessment: the assessment conundrum is proving one of the hardest areas for policy makers to tackle who are currently abiding by a “no harm to students” approach

In this report we detail the comments made regarding these common themes, including how participants discussed the “silver linings”. Everyone spoke of how the challenges of COVID-19 can be turned into opportunities for better delivery of education services. Reforms are needed and



strong collaboration amongst teacher unions, governments, schools, learners, the education industry, and families will lie at the heart of future strategies.

Blended learning now needs to take centre stage in teacher training. The crisis has brought into question the role of the teacher. Technology will not replace the teacher but those with digital competencies will certainly substitute those without such skills. Teachers are faced with many complex issues in terms of delivering online and blended learning so support and guidance in the continuous professional development (CPD) is essential. Participants agreed unanimously that teachers are more than just content delivery systems.

Certainly, the general sentiment is that we need to see better training at the service level to give teachers the requisite digital skills. Such training should be considerate both of how to confidently utilise ICTs and for teachers to embed them in their pedagogy in the long-term.

Going forward it will be interesting to see universities and teacher pre-service institutes revamping their curricula to include ICTs and digital skills such that teachers are better prepared. Furthermore, teachers have a great capacity to develop content, but this talent is not used enough. We need to focus on CPD and make sure teachers do not standstill.

Assessment is a big dilemma because we are used to exams taking place in a controlled environment. Until this is answered, more emphasis will be on formative learning.

Digital transformation has long been touted as the future of education, but such words remain ineffective while the ICT infrastructures all around the world do not match the dreams. Infrastructure

investment is critical to deliver on the ideals of blended learning and digital competencies, and above all is an absolute necessity to ward off the danger of a digital.

Important questions are now being asked on how governments are going to know how much students have missed during these extended closures. What will be the plan to make sure this is addressed within the timeframe of re-openings? In sections 2.3 to 2.8 we summarise the key findings and ask several how might we questions, with the purpose of framing the challenges being faced into actions.

2.2 Overviews: European Schoolnet, US State Educational Technology Directors Association, Arab League Educational, Cultural & Scientific Organisation, World Bank Group (LATAM).

The European Schoolnet (a network of 34 ministries of education) have done more in the last 6 weeks than in the last 15 years concerning the application and use of technology in schools. An important collaboration strategy has been to create an exchange platform for all European ministries of education to support each other in “emergency remote teaching”, provide information and webinars on how to set up online examinations and start making arrangements for the progressive reopening of schools. European Schoolnet is using future classroom ambassadors to produce teaching videos and from the beginning of May is launching a major survey, with the European Commission, to assess how teachers have used ICTs during the crisis and how solution providers have made their products accessible. The first set of data will be collected before the summer holidays. They have identified that many teachers in Europe are not well-prepared, finding difficulty in switching to greater use of digital technologies and in some cases many with below the required digital competence. At primary school ages the challenges are even more substantial given the necessary greater role of parents in learning activities. A positive impact has been that teachers have simply had no choice but to use technology and hence revise and update their pedagogical approach. COVID-19 could prove to be the wake-up call to exploit better and more innovative pedagogical practices. The European Schoolnet has published a number of very useful resources for policy makers and educators for remote education, available at: <http://www.eun.org/news>

In the US, the State Educational Technology Directors Association have witnessed similar technological unreadiness amongst both teachers and learners. Twelve States in the US already have e-learning days allowed within their programs – mostly because

these are “snow days”. But educators have rallied those twelve States to learn from their experiences of delivering e-learning. States already have an online professional learning community to collaborate with each other, but still do not have enough tools such as available devices and accessible hotspots. Contingency plans have included sending homework in parcels. In terms of recovery many States in the US are assessing the issue of accessibility of online tools and their inter-operability; at the same time, bearing in mind the need to embed cyber-security measures. One highlighted silver lining is that this could represent a good opportunity for innovation by leveraging technology such that students are creating and sharing content amongst themselves. The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) have launched their own e-learning coalition. More details are available on the SETDA website at: <https://www.setda.org/main-coalitions/elearning/>

Very early into the COVID-19 crisis, the Arab League Educational, Cultural & Scientific Organisation (ALECSO), launched an initiative to encourage Arab countries to adopt e-learning solutions through a strategic plan and have already worked on some early agreements with international technology solution providers. Essential advice is not to just adopt an e-learning platform but an overall sustainable solution as part of a long-term strategic plan. Most recently ALECSO organised an online session to train the trainers with the participation of more than 600 teachers from 21 Arab countries. This cascade approach of training the trainers, along with early development and adoption of a strategic ICT for education plan are key pillars of advice and support that ALECSO is giving to its member countries. They have also produced a handbook (in partnership with UNESCO and the Smart Learning Institute of Beijing Normal University) on “Facilitating Flexible Learning” with core components to support disrupted learning (see § 2.7 for more details). This draws on the Chinese experience of maintaining uninterrupted learning during COVID-19 and is available to download at: <https://iite.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Handbook-on-Facilitating-Flexible-Learning-in-COVID-19-Outbreak-SLIBNU-V1.2-20200315.pdf>

In Latin America, governments must urgently act to deal with existing deficiencies, such as attracting people to go into the teaching profession, in which up until now digital skills are not normally addressed. Most countries in Latin America have adopted the use of TV and radio to deliver content and lessons to learners along with utilising these services to give guidelines to parents for better schooling from home. An important silver lining of the current crisis is that the case for far better connectivity and

ICT infrastructures in now being strongly made in LATAM countries. The key for the long-term future is to include digital competencies in national curricula. This approach will help to accelerate the region's need to play a bigger part in the 4th industrial revolution and ensure wide application of 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and social & communications skills.

2.3 ICTs & Digital Learning

In Hungary, of the 1.2m children in K12 education, between 15 to 20% cannot participate in digital learning due to the lack of equipment, connectivity, and family support; the most basic factor being the socioeconomic background of the family. Without addressing how to take care of this 15-20%, a clear digital divide in education will open-up. Australia is also experiencing the same equity issues, where there are a significant number of private schools who have been able to respond independently in providing e-learning methodologies.

In Arab League and Islamic Development Bank member countries there is exists a wide variance in internet connectivity and accessibility along with device ownership. Some countries are weak in terms of their digital transformation and private sector technology partners are essential in playing an active role to strengthen capacity. Each country should develop a suitable and bespoke model based upon their own variables, including their internal educational environment, the speed of connectivity and types of devices available. Egypt has had successes in the use of online learning management systems (LMS) and of services such Microsoft Teams, as result of its existing Education 2.0 strategy, launched well before the interruption of COVID-19, but accelerated since. The LMS can look like a virtual school, complete with daytime schedule. Regarding the ICT infrastructure, ALECSO has identified three main components of immediate short-term continuity actions by governments: the network, the software/platform, and content.

In Belgium, the decision not to give access to any new content has exposed inequalities in access to ICTs as well as real gaps in knowledge levels of ICTs in schools and individual teachers. The issue of equity has been a key consideration of the government in not giving new content. The government had already developed a digital strategy, but the COVID-19 crisis has changed their approach. Before they were thinking about equipment for the classrooms, now they are thinking about the students who must all have access to equipment at home. They need to fill the gaps between the different socioeconomic circumstances of the parents to avoid any digital divide.

Access to broadband is the most outstanding infrastructural issue exposed by the current school closures. The problem is not just in developing countries but even well industrialised nations such as Canada with its geographical size. Provinces like Ontario, they have been working in terms of the ICT infrastructure and how to provide the best possible experience for students while at home. This may include caching systems from the schools and deploying at homes. They have already established a partnership with Apple and Rogers (internet service provider) to make free-of-charge broadband available to students. Canadian officials remain wary about vulnerability to bait-and-switch commercial tactics, but so far it has been a good start. For families that do not have connectivity, some schools have opened-up their WiFi networks for the local community.

In Spain, each of the 17 regional authorities has its own ministry of education – each using their own platform. Currently the Spanish ministry of education is using two main tools: Spanish TV and partnership agreements with technology companies. Due diligence is important, and they do not recommend any resources outside their existing selection. The Spanish national TV channel has a whole morning dedicated to lessons and the government is working with the TV companies to collect metadata. The government has also come to agreement with the three main mobile operators to provide 4G, especially to disadvantaged children. They remain acutely aware that investment in infrastructure is a priority to avoid a digital divide. Spain now has 90% penetration of fast broadband access in its schools.

Although Kenya has faced challenges particularly with access to technology and devices, they regard the platform with the most promise is online learning through the Kenya Education Cloud. Due to a recent flood of tools, platforms, and contents it seems there needs to better coordination with industry vendors to allow for diligent dissemination of the information at the ministry level and avoid teachers getting overwhelmed at the school level.

The UK government previously had the “home access” project (mostly using dongles) which fitted better for those who were digitally excluded. Now, in England, the government has been poised to announce a cloud solution for all schools giving a common set of cloud-based tools; one being G-suite and the other being a 365 solution. It is then up to the schools which they choose – Microsoft or Google. Yet plenty are concerned over the danger of deepening any digital divide. Currently, about 800,000 schoolchildren are excluded because they do not have devices other than a mobile phone.

Many children, when they return to school, may not have been taught at home at all. The UK government has been investigating large-scale procurement of devices, but delivery times are excessive due to the reduction in manufacturing capacity in China, freight diminishing and other sectors (such as financial legal) responding rapidly to homeworking and buying up existing stock.

Zimbabwe is engaging parents through radio and newspapers. The ministry of primary & secondary education is working on an online education platform in partnership with Econet Wireless. Currently about 1.6 million learners are using their online platform. Lessons for TV are still under development. Across Africa, connectivity is a big problem outside of the main urban areas and hence most countries are using TV and radio. In higher education there are better facilities and many universities are connected to national research education networks (NRENs) that provide robust high-speed connectivity. The district education authorities in Zimbabwe are looking to have cluster schools to act as local hubs and the government is planning to increase the budget to deliver ICT for education in the long-term.

In Namibia, they have faced issues with connectivity and access to technology, as well as a lack of ICT literacy amongst educators. The government is currently assessing the availability of services on the ground by sending a questionnaire to all schools and are in contact with teachers to provide educational content for uploading. COVID-19 has noticeably increased the sense of urgency to implement ICT for education. After being offered multiple choices from international vendors, the government wishes to have a unified platform for delivering online learning. The existing platform, Kopano, developed in partnership with UNESCO needs to be upscaled to embed conferencing facilities such that teachers and students can communicate face-to-face regularly. But this requires improved connectivity and a more extensive development of content and materials. Also, it is essential to have an offline version of the e-learning platform for downloading materials, especially for learners with poor internet access in rural and remote areas. The government is now at the final stages of their ICT for education policy review and once the current lockdown is over, should have it finalised in two to three months.

France has offered a wide variety of content and resources on the ministry of education's website for digital pedagogy. The first problem faced was an infrastructure not being scaled for the size of the COVID-19 confinement. These issues have now been solved and the government is providing video conferencing services as well as encouraging

teachers to use digital educational content. Equally they remain cognisant to the fact that it is necessary to also prepare students and teachers in the use of digital technologies for learning. In the medium-term the French ministry of education wants to take advantage of the current crisis to improve its digital strategy – locally by October and nationally by November, mobilising large numbers of stakeholders from both public and private sectors.

Angola also has an opportunity to invest in its ICT infrastructure in schools and political decision-makers should be influenced in terms of sustainability. The cost of connectivity and data still remains a big problem. For education to have a special place the government needs to engage in constructive dialogue with the telecommunications operators and service providers. Teacher training in ICTs remains a big challenge in Angola but the big opportunity is convincing the government to invest ICT for education.



Costa Rica's ilearn at home strategic plan has meant dividing the more than 1 million students into 4 categories: with devices and connectivity; with devices and poor connectivity; with devices and no connectivity; with no devices and no connectivity. The plan is based around these four different types of populations, with learning guides produced for each group. All now have an Office 365 account using Teams.

Based on access, Rwanda has employed four different technology channels to deliver content: TV, radio, the national e-learning platform and USB. The best system is the e-learning platform, but the big issues is device accessibility. The government has supported the delivery of devices to schools, but they are not taken home. So, during this time we are seeing low numbers of people accessing the platform due to lack of devices in households. The government has come to agreement with the telecommunication operators to zero-rate any educational content.

Somalia already had plans in place for digitising the curriculum in 2021. That has been moved forward to 2020 and the ministry of education will be launching online content within the next two months. This requires considerable procurement with the likes of Amazon supporting the ministry of education with the delivery of devices and technical equipment. The big concern remains connectivity and accessibility to devices in rural and remote areas. The government is moving quickly to work with international partners and donors such the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and has launched a national response plan to provide lessons in partnership the telecommunications operators. The majority of schools in Somalia are private and the government is helping with the procurement of equipment at a subsidised rate, yet the challenge remains to deliver to remote areas. The ministry wishes to deliver content through an online platform that will be completed by 1st August 2020, though 60% of students in rural areas will not be able to access this so they are looking at local delivery of USB devices.

The view from the Dominican Republic is that now is a good time to think about best practices in ICT for education and how the future looks incorporating more blended learning. The country has a digital republic program to deliver devices, but there is a challenge in training on the use of such equipment. Strengthening the ICT infrastructure is part of the country's plan yet maintaining the primacy of teachers in the delivery of content.

In Mozambique they have acted to leverage the existing capacity of the ICT community. This includes working with the operators to deliver a special package for students to connect and have access to the fibre network. This was one of the main bottlenecks that the government opened-up. They are also learning that having their own dedicated national research and education network, MoRENet, helps address both the national strategy and having a device problem. In the long-term, further roll-out of MoRENet to cover the entire country will be an important measure for the future of Mozambican ICT for education.

2.4 ICTs & Digital Learning – “How Might We?”

How might we better leverage the power of ICTs to reach every learner?

How might we better supply broadband and ensure equity of access across rural and more deprived areas?

How might we provide the best possible learning experience where the infrastructure is lacking?

How might we utilise caching and offline services to overcome connectivity problems?

How might we better collaborate with industry technology partners and operators to make broadband and devices available during the emergency response?

How might we develop standards for cloud-based solutions, thus ensuring a common set of tools for teachers & learners?

How might we make certain of evidence-based research practices for edtech companies to use when developing and improving their products?

How might we repurpose existing infrastructure to respond to the current challenges?

How might we move ideas of investment into front of classroom to getting technology out of schools and into communities?

How might we provide consistent access to education and unified curricula through different modes of delivery?

How might we encourage more public-private partnerships to overcome the many difficulties still faced with ICT for education?

How might we embed cyber-security and ensure the online safety of students both into policy making and technological investments?

How might we guard against this issue remaining narrow with the provision of devices and make sure we account for the human and relational aspects of the challenge of ICT for education?

How might we advance the practices and behaviour of students while working on devices from home?

How might we better support parents in facilitating the use of devices and e-learning technologies at home?

2.5 Teaching, Pedagogy & Assessment

At primary school level the process of delivering and teaching content is made more complex by the necessity of parental involvement at home. Basic access to written content is not always preparing children with critical thinking, learning to validate, pick information sources and problem solving. So, teachers need to choose a new content framework using the internet which they are not necessarily trained and prepared for. Several countries are now looking for solutions that teachers can easily use to bring online content into practice.

Dealing with assessment is a conundrum and it is a challenge online to better measure learning outcomes. Are the educators able to write up examination questions in a suitable format given the new conditions? We should not separate educational tracks and competencies from the technology skills. For example, in Egypt teachers and professors do not have enough background in new technologies such as learning management systems or what is meant by integrating e-learning platforms into pedagogical practices. Thus, it is essential to improve continuous professional development (CPD) to give teachers knowledge about the tools.

This sentiment was repeated by many participants who agree their countries need to urgently issue guidelines for teachers. Egypt now has a training program every day for teachers and to share their daily problems. By giving lessons during the day and at the end of the day speaking with master trainers for more advice is proving successful in upskilling teachers about ICTs for education. Teachers use Teams for engaging with learners online during the morning and then have their own teacher training in the evenings. This helps with best practice and the use of the learning management system. Now we should be looking at guidelines for best practices for online teaching and to consider changing the annual evaluation system for teachers. To make a sustainable model using blended learning then we should change the evaluation reporting mechanism for teachers in appreciation of their changing methodologies. The next step is then training teachers on how to develop their own digital content.

In the UK, a consortium of schools has formed the Oak National Academy and has formalised hour-long lessons to essentially recreate a traditional school online. There remains some scepticism that this is engaging students. One suggestion may be to have a video conference to the whole class for about 30 minutes then for the teachers to have one-to-one 5-minute phone calls with every single child in their class to see how they are doing. This also provides

accountability on learning and an opportunity to especially focus on those students who are further behind at home because they are the ones who really need the professional help of teachers. The immediate concern at primary and early years is the teachers are now the parents who have neither the course materials nor are properly trained.

In Zimbabwe, with learners using the online platform there remains the need to produce a best practice model to provide continuous assessment. Previously in Zimbabwe, online learning was not so much part of a system run by the ministry of primary and secondary education but rather the responsibility of individual schools. They found that many teachers had an ICT phobia that was limiting their capacity, meaning coverage of education online is limited. They are now inviting teachers to develop lessons for radio, working with the ministry of information and private broadcasters.

Kenya concurred that assessment is a major challenge. The assumption that face-to-face pedagogy is transferable to online learning needs to be addressed. Blended learning now needs to take centre stage in teacher training; not just because there is a crisis now but for the long-term. It needs to be acknowledged that the challenges also have to do with the mindset of learners themselves, who have been brought up that learning happens at school and not at home. It is essential, when developing online learning content, that it is standardised at all levels. So, when asking teachers to embed blended learning in their professional development they need to have standards in place to help them adapt accordingly.



In Canada, the minister of education said early on, when school closures were announced, that no student will be negatively impacted. The reality is that we are seeing considerable parent and student anxiety. By working with teacher unions and stakeholders, if students are not engaging, the position is not to move to a “discipline stance”. Firstly, the government acknowledges the anxiety of families while continuing to encourage active participation. The mantra is very much “no harm to students” because of the COVID-19 crisis. Formative assessment can be applied across age groups, but the ministry of education is especially focussed on grade 12 because of university applications that require numerical assessment. Teachers in Canada initially wanted to deliver a lot of work to students and this caused stress in some homes with multiple emails and communications from teachers to parents and students. So, they have put a lot of time into preparing webinars in the usage of their virtual learning environment built by D2L. Prior to COVID-19, 40% of teachers had never logged into the system, so they needed to be quickly upskilled to get them onto the platform. This includes, getting past the mindset that “technology is evil”.

Also, from the outset Spain decided that responses and policies must not harm students. As a rule, all students will pass their courses. So, the remainder of this academic year is very much review and revision of existing content. Yet the final access exam for universities is still going to happen in July in Spain because it is mandatory. The view from the ministry is that producing a worthy strategy for assessment remains one of the toughest challenges.

In the US, individual States are addressing the assessment conundrum differently. Some have gone straight to pass/fail; some have grading policies but with greater flexibility. State assessments have been cancelled for the year, so it is now on the teachers to provide evidence that the student accomplished certain skills. Looking forward it could be that this crisis changes the view of the one stop test being the be all and end all. In the future we may see a change to benchmarking with more varied assessment, mixing objective with subjective. We need to support teachers on how they can leverage technology tools to instruct their students, ensuring that providers and coaches are supporting the teachers as part of their CPD.

In Namibia, the current use of technology and the online platform for teachers is optional. Nothing compels them to do so. The country now has online literacy training and ongoing guidelines on how to use technology in learning, so there needs to be something by way of policies that compels teachers

to teach by blended learning. They must start using ICT for education in the class because there is no going back. At the University of Namibia, they are supporting the ministry of education with their online platform for teachers to exchange materials and share their experiences. The Kopano platform is a solution with three components: collaboration; peer-to-peer working; massive open online courses (MOOCs). Of course, the MOOC platform can be used by learners also, but this returns to the problem of access and investing more in the ICT infrastructure.

Mostly across Latin America assessment is going to be very flexible in consideration of multiple factors. There is no way to bring back all the students and place them in orderly grades as before, so the overall aim is to make sure assessment does not harm students. Such discussions in governments are ongoing and in many countries the criteria for university acceptance has not yet been finalised.

For assessment in Tunisia up to K12 they are using the marks of the first and second semesters. For university they have announced that students and teachers will come back at the beginning of June and condense the learning into a final four weeks with exams immediately after.

In France, it initially proved a challenge for teachers to do online classes. They have a service called my classroom at home. It existed before COVID-19 but with little uptake, so teachers have had to learn to use it in very short time. The government also needs to guide teachers in the safe use of online tools. Some local education authorities have been organising online training to upskill teachers in the use of new technologies.

Even though many governments in Europe have acted with industry to help reduce the problem of access to technology, this is not enough as the human relationship aspects and pedagogical issues become more apparent. The problem has been narrowed down to the relationship of how a teacher can reach their students; but this connection is not the only problem given that the schooling infrastructure is so much more than this with key relationships between teachers, departmental heads, parents and so on. Summative assessment is the big reason why many countries in Europe want to bring students back before the end of the summer break.

In Morocco, the ministry of education took the initiative to provide online teaching and encouraged teachers and administrators to connect with students using social media and video conferencing. But what immediately struck is the lack of teacher training for online learning. Also, from the learners’ point of

view it has shown an inequality especially between urban and remote areas. The ministry is still thinking about exams and how to deal with assessment. Morocco has two different types of assessment, formative assessment done throughout the year and summative assessment at the end of primary school, end of middle school (9th grade) and the most important at the end of grade 12. How do we meet the challenge of students sitting these exams?

Costa Rica has now trained 70,000 teachers in how to use Teams along with other e-learning tools and has started implementing plans for teachers working better with students. An important consideration is the pastoral care offered by the school. For example, for some students the main meal of the day is at school, so the government implemented a plan one week after school closures for delivering groceries to homes. They have developed a portfolio for parents to help with formative learning and when they next pick up their groceries, they hand in their latest portfolio. Costa Rica is now producing a new qualification framework for teachers, incorporating digital competencies.

Teachers in Belgium already have access to a validated online learning platform, but the government wants this to develop further with greater involvement from the profession: more interactivity for teachers, peer learning and producing content for e-learning. In the long-term the focus must be to how best train teachers in any newly committed drive for ICT for education. They already have digital competency frameworks that include personalised learning and in the long-term these can contribute to the new innovations in teaching. The real difficulty is how to manage the technology which requires technical support and training of teachers on the necessary technical skills to a competent standard. The mantra from Belgium is "training, training, training".



2.6 Teaching, Pedagogy & Assessment – “How Might We?”

How might we bring assessment online in the same we have done for learning?

How might we enhance teacher certification and qualification to include digital competency?

How might we redesign pedagogies to teach remotely in an effective way and ensure this becomes part of pre-service training and continuous professional development?

How might we support teachers adapting to the transition from front of classroom to online learning?

How might we identify the necessary competencies to thrive in a rapidly transforming world?

How might we redesign curricula to quickly embed blended learning into the education system?

How might we create a more inclusive response that is mindful of special needs learners?

How might we assess learning outcomes for this school year and particularly produce numerical assessment for grade 12 students' university applications?

How might we scale up greater peer-to-peer collaboration amongst teachers and implement policies of training the trainers in ICTs?

How might we prioritise online safety and monitoring of online content as we implement more digital learning activities?

How might we produce a common framework in countries relating to content delivery for teachers?

How might we better prepare learners to thrive in the new digital environments?

How might we make assessment more meaningful and address the balance between formative and summative assessment?

How might we design content delivery mechanisms that also have the capacity for interactive assessment of learners?

How might we encourage the teaching community to embrace digital technologies as part of their continuous professional development?

How might we make learners understand the new shape of education?

2.7 Policy, Planning & Cooperation

In Europe we await with interest the findings of the survey launched in partnership with the European Commission to see how teachers have used ICTs during the COVID-19 crisis and how solution providers have collaborated to make their technology accessible. The European Schoolnet had previously built a future classroom. The idea was to create a living-room effect – a futuristic learning space. Now, because of COVID-19, everyone is in their living room, but students are going back to a traditional school set up once re-openings occur. Some are now asking the question, is this what we want? We can now think of a concept redefining the school, with learning not just taking place within the confines of a campus. For policy makers, the big danger is bringing everyone back to school without learning the lessons we have experienced from COVID-19. We should also think of a school as an organisation on the digital level. This is currently lacking. For example, a digital staffroom to better connect teachers and heads of departments. Schools in the future will need to better invest in connecting with parents, even more so if future school closures put further pressure on parents having to help with learning at home.

Governments must develop strategies for students to continue developing their work-related skills in the future, while extending the classroom walls to the home. Participants question what direction will pedagogy evolve? Many would like to see more project, problem-based learning as the future direction of travel, as opposed to the narrower traditional curricula. Can we use technology, such as artificial intelligence, to empower teachers to deliver better project-based learning?

Regarding the use of technology platforms, content service providers and software of e-learning, there are so many players in the market that teachers are now asking which ones do they use? Hence, governments need to provide the bed of support in answering such questions. Governments are now stepping up their efforts to work in partnership, especially with the telecommunications operators. In Africa, most countries have established a taskforce to respond to the school closures and identify best practices. Organisations such as the Association for the Development of Education in Africa are bringing together countries on shared challenges in Africa: ICT infrastructure in rural areas, non-formal education, technical, vocational education & training (TVET) and digital literacy.

Policy making in assessment seems very much a moving target at the moment. The challenge is not just one of access but because of the nature of

controlled summative assessment. Many countries are viewing that this issue cannot be properly revisited until school reopen.

Zimbabwe has seen some positive actions after closing schools early their policy efforts have been two-pronged: the entire education sector coming together to keep learning going on and individual schools making their own effort in partnership with the local community. With the support of UNICEF, they have printed storybooks for primary and early years students. The silver lining of COVID-19 has been to witness the best collaboration between teacher unions, the ministry of education, NGOs, and the private sector. They hope this benefit will continue.

The Islamic Development Bank has been supporting member countries by doing needs assessment. Teacher training, availability of platforms, content and delivery of lessons are amongst the key aspects to identify with member countries. This includes working with multilateral agencies such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to assess needs and allow for a short-term response to urgent funding requirements. Projects are now being approved faster than ever. For existing projects, stakeholders are being asked how they may repurpose these projects in response to the demands placed upon by COVID-19. This period gives an opportunity to redesign many education and ICT projects. It must not be forgotten that distance learning is new to many countries and they do not know whether it is a permanent or temporary solution. Blended learning could be a solution, but many countries do not even have the minimum needed for such a solution.

Somalia has one of the lowest enrolment rates in sub-Saharan Africa which could worsen as a result of COVID-19, so it was essential for the government to produce a national response strategy that supports teachers, learners and communities in regard to health; ensure continuity of learning using technologies; and to facilitate the safe return to school after the crisis.

COVID-19 has exposed a vulnerability all over the world that none of us managed to predict. Specifically, in Africa, the oft-spoken transformative learning is not happening. Many countries focus on the how and the what but the why is often missing. Blended learning must take root now and that means curriculum change is critical if it is going to be embedded in technology. Another problem in Africa is that although the education sector has enjoyed a large proportion of government budgets, it is mostly spent on salaries. Investment in new technologies, ICT infrastructures, teacher training, blended learning

and curriculum reform should be ring-fenced from the wage commitments of ministries of education. In doing so it is important consider the community as a whole and current access to ICTs. For example, most online platforms exclude the parents, being just for learners. Parents should be involved in online education. What happens with ICTs affects all sectors and this means better engagement and partnership with industry is an urgent priority to strengthen the infrastructure.

In Kenya, they have been advising the minister of education that we should see this crisis as an opportunity to change things. We should not be waiting for things to go back to normal because it will not be the same again. We need to gradually transform the mindset of people from seeing learning in terms of schooling to learning outside of school. Education is currently situated within a physical bricks and mortar environment. Yet at the same, we must be mindful of the disadvantaged and those children who are left behind. So, we need to bring research into this because we are reacting to a situation without looking at the evidence of the learners for whom we are planning for.

The big consideration of many States in the US is the implementation of blended learning, the mixture of analogue and digital tools. Technology gives an opportunity for the personalisation of pedagogies and many are hoping that this crisis sparks innovation, not just in technologies but in policy making. State leaders are now especially working with technology providers on infrastructure, especially in remote areas.

In Latin America, people in ministries of education are already turning their minds to what the future may hold for different forms of education. This crisis has affected students in multiple dimensions – the ability to learn, anxiety, emotional pressure and the standards required for assessment. Will future forms of education combine what happens at home and school? We cannot go back – the home will play a greater role in future learning.

The Handbook on Facilitating Flexible Learning produced by UNESCO, the International Research & Training Centre for Rural Education, ALECSO and Beijing Normal University advises to develop a strategy around core elements for supporting learning:

Reliable communications infrastructure
Suitable digital learning resources
Friendly learning tools
Effective learning methods

Constructive instructional organisations
Effective support services for teachers and learners
Close cooperation between governments, schools, and enterprises

COVID-19 is an opportunity to rethink the whole school – the curriculum, the pedagogy, the governance. Students are the easiest part of the equation because they are ready to use the technology.

If the future of education involves greater incorporation of blended learning and delivery through multiple channels like TV, radio, online platforms, and gaming then this raises new challenges. Would such a model result in subscription base for certain education services? Do we frame the future of education in such a context and ask what are the returns? The return on learning? The return on information? The return on trust (parents supporting teachers)? The return on investment? Where do governments decide to put the money in the long-term?

Education will not be the same beyond COVID-19, especially in higher education. The words of futurists such as Thomas Frey and Clayton Christensen, who predict that by 2030 half of universities will disappear have been mostly met with scepticism. But some now believe this may be accelerated. Certainly, universities will need to be more proactive in offering distance learning degrees and postgraduate qualifications. Potential reductions in overseas students (who pay higher fees) whose travel decisions will be affected by COVID-19, will have a considerable impact on university incomes.

COVID-19 has lifted the veil on the reality of us now already being 20 years into the 21st century and have been talking about 21st century skills and education for that long. This has pushed educators and policy makers into properly considering learning to learn – which means personalised learning is now becoming a reality, because the child is alone at home. COVID-19 has pushed us faster than we expected.

Yet we must be realistic post-COVID, given that this is a huge health and economic crisis. Resources are going to be tight and we must encourage private sector cooperation, particularly from the telecommunications operators, ISPs and ICT sector which is going through its golden age and has the resource capability to support the education community at local and national levels.

2.8 Policy, Planning & Cooperation – “How Might We?”

How might we encourage greater parental participation in determining home learning content without compromising academic standards?

How might we accelerate existing education transformation programs in a bid to respond to the problems caused by COVID-19?

How might we ensure open dialogues between countries and a multilateral approach to collaboration in ICT for education?

How might we convince governments to ring-fence infrastructure expenditures and invest more in ICTs?

How might we shift priorities in the public sector to embed blended learning in teacher service training and continuous professional development?

How might we use this opportunity to implement new learning outcomes and really develop 21st century skills?

How might we establish that the short-term out of classroom learning is properly embraced as a long-term strategy in preparedness for future disruptions?

How might we go about closing the equity gap amongst schools in different regions?

How might we give parents access to teaching resources during this and any future emergency response?

How might we navigate the deluge of information and technical resources from industry, and identify the good from the bad?

How might we utilise online infrastructures, such as MOOCs for training teachers and providing content to learners?

How might we effectively plan for the reopening of schools?

How might we encourage governments and industry to move quicker and smarter in implementing public-private partnerships for improved learning outcomes?

How might we make certain the policy makers distinguish when synchronised teaching and learning is essential and when asynchronous learning is beneficial?

How might we segue government polices for short-term continuity into long-term sustainability?

How might we utilise captured data to inform future policy and evidence-based decision making to better build resilience within educational systems?

How might we ensure that post-COVID we do not easily slip back into “business as usual”?

- End -

For further details or copies of this report, please contact john.glassey@brains.global

Download the first GOLA Report

Our first online video conference took place at the beginning of April to hear the challenges and efforts to find solutions in response to the worldwide school closures due to COVID-19 and the necessity to ensure continuous education.

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