



THE EDUCATION
COLLABORATIVE

The 2020 Education Collaborative Virtual Conference

Changing the Narrative of African
Higher Education

Conference Report | June 16, 2020



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CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The speed of disruption in the global educational system has never been seen before. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in disruptions, as thousands of schools are closed and over [eight million higher-ed students are out of school in Africa alone](#). Yet, in the midst of this, there has been a series of speedy creative and innovative actions unique to the African context, creating a new narrative of education on the continent. Schools, with prior face-to-face instruction, are adapting unusual e-learning technologies, re-training faculty and staff, and restructuring pedagogy to ensure continuity of studies. It's been clear that in tackling the present disruption, we've discovered new strength and disposition to innovate, rethink, and build robust educational systems that will prepare the next generation of African leaders.

The inaugural 2020 Education Collaborative virtual conference held on June 16th, 2020 shared context-specific successful university strategies, administration, teaching, and learning approaches used during the COVID-19 period and campus shutdowns. The conference attracted educators, lecturers, administrative staff, university executive teams, educational organisations, government representatives and policymakers from different countries. It focused on sharing innovative methods to curb the COVID-19 disruptions, setting an institutional direction for the new normal, and providing insights to post-COVID strategies for university teaching, learning and administration.

The conference was also live-streamed on social media pages of Ashesi University, Education Collaborative, Association of African Universities TV and on-campus of African Development University.

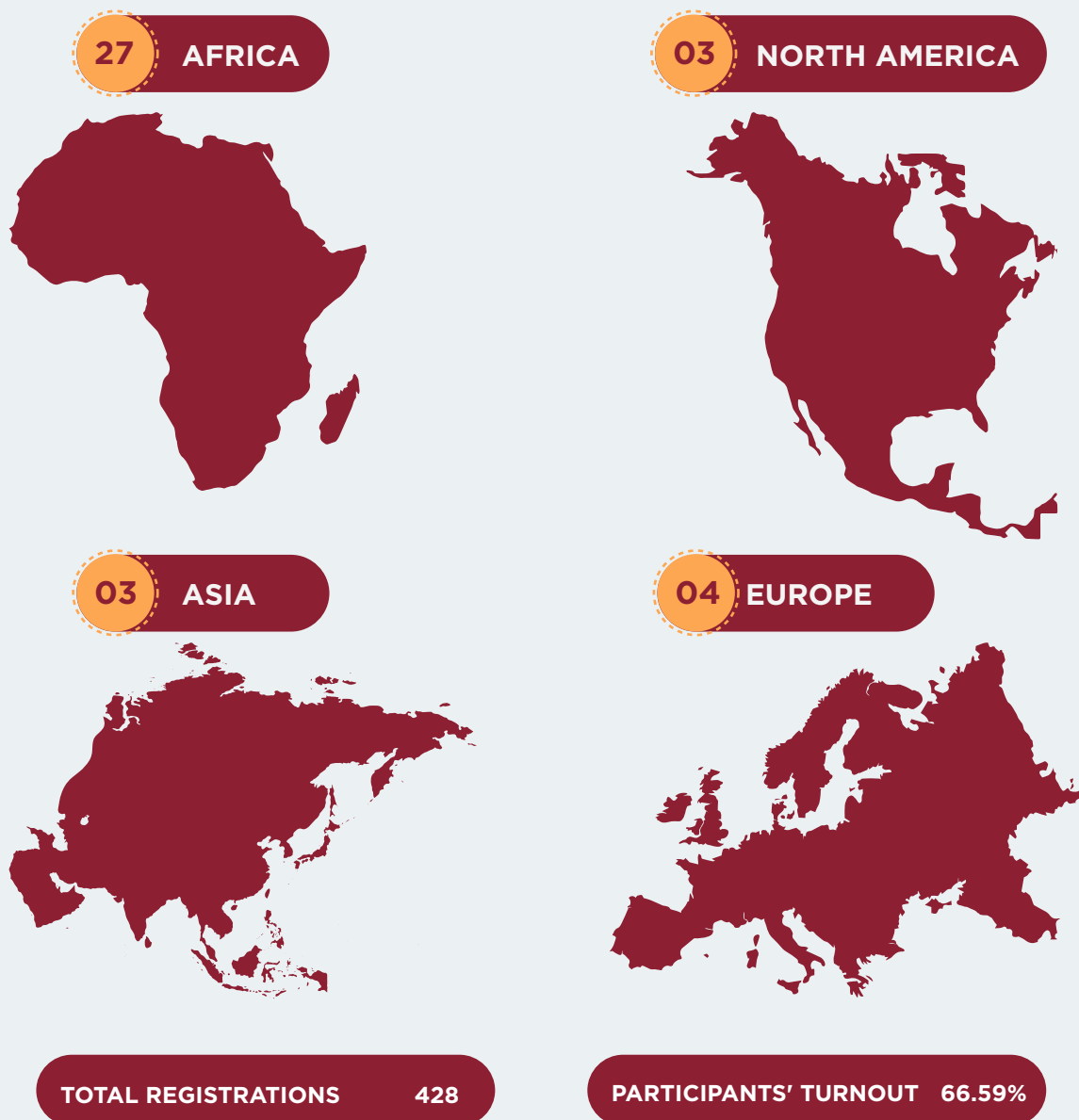
MAJOR OUTCOMES AND HIGHLIGHTS

- Full-day virtual conference with six sessions was held on 16th June 2020.
- Increased participation from countries in Northern Africa such as Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya.
- Approximately 50% of African countries represented.
- 285 participants were in attendance
- 144 different institutions were represented.
- A French translation was offered in the sessions.
- Live streaming of the conference was held on the campus of a network member, African Development University, and on various social media platforms.

AUDIENCE & PARTICIPATION

A total of 428 participants from 37 countries registered for the conference. The conference had 285 participants resulting in a registration turnout rate of 66.59%. However, across the six sessions, the conference received a total of 412 individual engagements.

The conference attendees were from 37 countries across four continents; Africa, North America, Asia and Europe. From the 35 countries, 27 (74%) came from Africa with the majority coming from West and North Africa. For the first time, the Collaborative engaged participants in countries like Egypt, Morocco, Swaziland, Ethiopia, Benin, Togo, Oman, Philippines, United Kingdom.



SESSION	# ATTENDEES	COUNTRIES REPRESENTED
Policy Implications and New Pathways amid COVID-19	114	25
Contextual Realities of Adopting Online Learning	114	26
Future of Teaching and Learning in Africa	37	9
Integrating Immersive Learning Methods	53	19
Ensuring Diversity & Inclusion in Online Learning	45	15
Preparing Students for the Future of Work	49	19
OVERALL CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION	TOTAL ENGAGEMENTS ACROSS SESSION 412	TOTAL # UNIQUE ATTENDEES 285



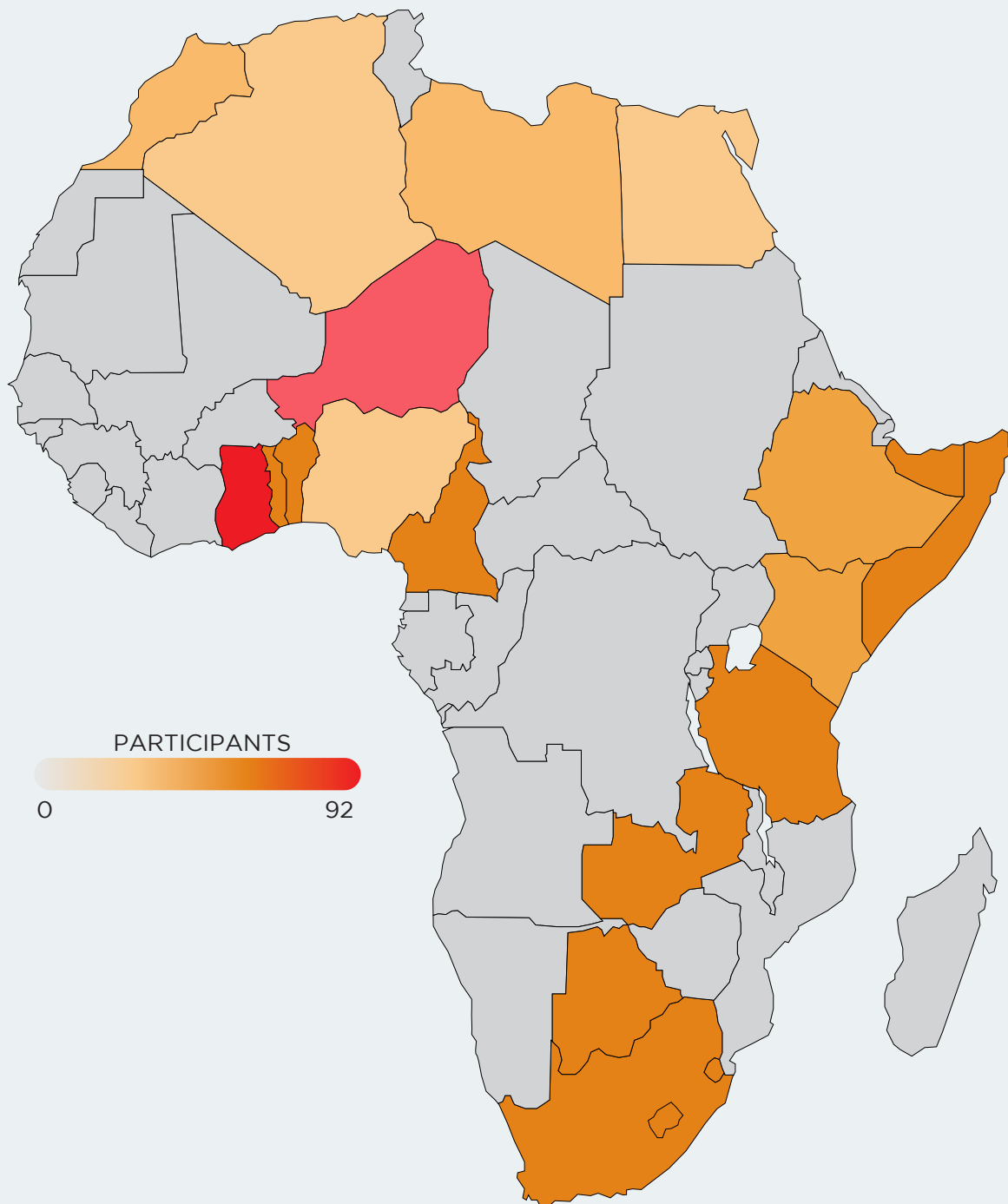
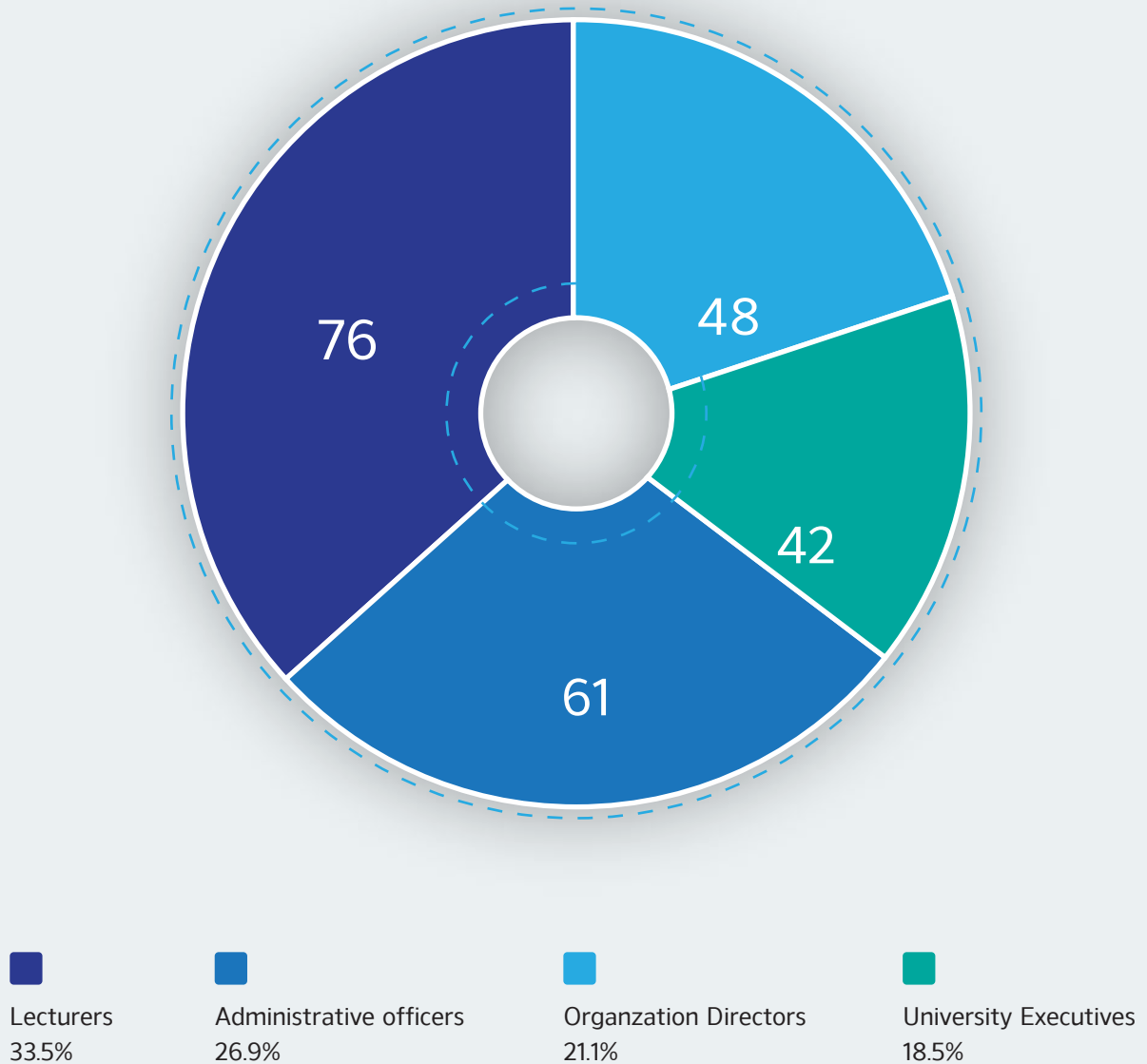


Figure 2: African countries represented at the virtual conference 2020

Stakeholders from 144 different institutions were in attendance. Majority of the institutions were public and private universities, NGO's, research institutions, civil societies, international development organizations and government agencies. Participants cut across lecturers, university executives and administrators, heads of corporate and non-governmental organizations, international development agencies and representatives of government agencies. Below is a snapshot of the roles held by the conference participants.

Figure 3: Roles of sampled conference attendees



The conference also had coverage on social media platforms. Our partner and Ashesi University's mentee institution, African Development University (ADU) in Niger, hosted 50+ participants. Ministers from Niger, and stakeholders from other sectors such as business, civil society, academia, and the media, were in attendance for the live-stream edition of the conference on ADU campus ([read the report here](#)). Additionally, the conference was streamed live on the platforms below and has received more than 7, 000 views.

<p>Ashesi University's YouTube, Facebook & Twitter pages</p> 	<p>Education Collaborative's Facebook & Twitter pages</p> 	<p>Association of African Universities' Television, Facebook and YouTube pages</p> 
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CONFERENCE SPEAKERS & SESSIONS

All six sessions were curated to be engaging while providing practical insights for the administration of higher-ed institutions during and beyond the pandemic. Three of the sessions were panel discussions and the other three were workshops. Discussions began with policy and regulation in education, with a focus on Ghana, and continued with executive and university-level strategy. Subsequently, the discussions addressed faculty and staff related work inside and outside the classroom. A total of 16 speakers, panelists, facilitators, and moderators led the sessions and discussions.

These speakers and moderators are university and college-level executives, administrators, lecturers, course instructors, classroom facilitators, ed-tech professionals, policymakers, and developmental agencies in African-higher ed.



SPEAKERS, FACILITATORS AND MODERATORS



ARABA BOTCHWAY
Director of Admissions and
Financial Aid, Ashesi University



ANDREW ALLEN
Director of the Magelli Office of
Experiential Learning, Illinois
Gies College of Business



ANGELA AFFRAN
Consultant, Perkins
International



DERRICK OMARI
Founder, Tech Era



DR. ESI ANSAH
Educator, Founding Partner
and CEO of Axis Human Capital
Ltd



DR. MILLICENT ADJEI
Adjunct Lecturer & Director of
Diversity and International
Programs, Ashesi University



DR. NII MOI THOMPSON
Former Director-General,
National Development Planning
Commission



DR. OSEI YAW ADUTWUM
Deputy Minister of Education,
Ghana



KADER KANEYE
Founder and President, African
Development University



KWESI SAM
Research and Academic
Planning Directorate - Associa-
tion of African Universities-
Ghana



MR. ALEX WILLIAMS
Coordinator, Assistive Technolo-
gy Unit, University of Ghana



**PROF BAYLIE DAMTIE
YESHITA**
Vice-Chancellor Kepler
International University -
Rwanda



PROF. CHARLES BARNOR
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University
of Professional Studies



PROFESSOR HAYDEN NOEL
Clinical Associate Professor,
Illinois Gies College of Business



**PROFESSOR JANE NAANA
OPOKU-AGYEMANG**
Chancellor African Women
University Zimbabwe



YASMIN BUCKNOR KETEKU
COO, Ashesi University

MODERATED SESSIONS

The COVID-19 Test of Ghana's Educational System: Policy Implications and New Pathways

PANEL

Dr. Osei Yaw Adutwum,
Deputy Minister of Education, Ghana

Professor Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang,
Chancellor, African Women University - Zimbabwe

Dr. Nii Moi Thompson,
Former Director-General, National Development Planning Commission

MODERATOR

Kwesi Sam,
Research and Academic Planning Directorate - Association of African Universities- Ghana

Transitioning online: Contextual realities of the strategic decision to-go or not-to-go online

PANEL

Prof Baylie Dامتie Yeshita,
Vice-Chancellor Kepler International University
- Rwanda

Yasmin Bucknor Keteku,
Chief Operating Officer, Ashesi University

Kader Kaneye,
Founder and President, African Development
University (A.D.U.)

Prof. Charles Barnor,
Pro-Vice-Chancellor,
University of Professional Studies.

MODERATOR

Araba Botchway,
Director of Admissions and Financial Aid, Ashesi University

Re-thinking remote access online for students with disabilities

Mastercard Sponsored Session

PANEL

Mr. Alex Williams,
Coordinator, Assistive Technology Unit,
University of Ghana.

Derrick Omari,
Founder, Tech Era

Angela Affran,
Consultant, Perkins International

MODERATOR

Dr. Millicent Adjei,
Adjunct Lecturer & Director of Diversity
and International Programs, Ashesi University- Ghana

FACILITATED WORKSHOPS

What next?

Implications of our new normal on teaching and learning in Africa

FACILITATOR

Professor Hayden Noel, Clinical Associate Professor, Illinois Gies College of Business

Integrating immersive learning methods: The future of higher education

FACILITATOR

Andrew Allen, Director of the Magelli Office of Experiential Learning, Illinois Gies College of Business

Preparing students for the future world of work during the new normal

FACILITATOR

Dr. Esi Ansah, Educator, Founding Partner and CEO of Axis Human Capital Ltd.



Find the profiles of the speakers and facilitators engaged here.



SESSION INSIGHTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Stakeholders Forum:

The COVID-19 Test of Ghana's Educational System: Policy Implications and New Pathways.

Session Abstract

Though the novel coronavirus has ravaged different sectors of the economy across the world, one area undeniably affected is the educational system. In Ghana specifically, schools from the basic to the tertiary levels, remained closed for a few months, with its related challenges. This session assessed the educational system, the lessons learned, the gaps that have arisen, and the challenges, and chart new pathways to maximize the almost-disguised-opportunities that this pandemic has opened up for education delivery in Ghana.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS & QUOTES FROM PANELISTS

Below are some direct quotes from panelists:

The use of technology to expand inclusion and strategic COVID-19 interventions for education

Dr. Osei Yaw Adutwum: "We confronted the issues caused by COVID at the primary school level through TV and radio educational content and at the high school level by creating an online portal called iCampus. It has supported the employment of digital content."

Prof. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang: "Content access to a learner is very essential in e-learning. Distant learning assumes that the learner can self-learn. In this, teachers became our major focus and they needed to be retrained to equip them in these e-learning tools."

Teacher training and curriculum quality

Prof. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang: "Training faculty, support staff and students to help them use multiple ways of learning. I will call for a curriculum review especially in teacher training and also advocate for the training of current faculty, support staff and students to help them use multiple ways of learning"

Dr Nii Moi Thompson: "We need to pay attention to content. I would love to see that more attention is paid to the quality of the content than we have in the past. We have many authorities in education complaining about the quality of legal education, health education and so forth. So, I hope that as we implement these strategic interventions, we pay particular attention to the quality of content."

Short, medium, and long term policy focus on national education development goals

Dr. Osei Yaw Adutwum: “How do we ensure social distancing in the short, medium and long term? We have to look at logistics and requirements in terms of facemasks, sanitizers etc. we have to keep our children safe. After COVID-19, we need to look at different pathways to education using distance learning, blending learning, asynchronous and synchronous learning.”



Find session proceedings here



SESSION INSIGHTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

University Executives Panel Session

Transitioning to online: Contextual realities of the go, no-go decision

Session Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly caused leaders in education to make some of the toughest decisions in their careers. They have had to decide whether to transition online or not to transition online and consider how to implement their decision. In the African-context, that decision is not a simple go-no-go-decision. University leaders, therefore, examined continent-specific, institution-specific challenges and their future implication on university administration in Africa.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Institutional decisions made prior to and after transitioning online

Yasmin Bucknor Keteku: “We had adopted a course management system called canvas and this helped us move instruction online as there was already enough information there. Even with this tool and infrastructure, faculty had to adapt to delivering lectures in an online format. The decision to go online was made, giving a period of two weeks to prepare. Faculty were trained and supported”.

“99% Of students have been able to finish the term online, exceeding expectations of 80%. Seniors were able to complete the term online and did not have to come back on campus even after the soft reopening of schools in Ghana”.

Kader Kaneye: “The ADU culture is one of execution and getting things done. We may not be ready, but we learn by doing. The key challenge is that 70% of the students come from modest backgrounds so many of them could not afford to get internet access which is very expensive here”

Prof. Baylie Yeshita: “The transition online was relatively easy because we already had some of these systems in place. After we transitioned online, we had to now consider those who don't have electricity, so we submitted a project proposal to the European Union to buy charging units and we are still waiting for that. In the interim, without violating the government instruction of social distancing, discussing with organizations working in refugee camps, the students can come to campus to charge their laptops and go back”.

Financial aid and supporting students while learning remotely

Kader Kaneye: “ADU supported some students with laptops. We spoke to the main telco in Niger and reached an agreement where they whitelisted the server – not being charged when the address was used. That was a game-changer. It doubled the number of students who were connecting on the platform and it made it very easy for them.”

Prof. Baylie Yeshita: “25% of students come from refugee backgrounds. We partnered with some organizations to help shelter them. Every student has a laptop. We provide a modest amount to pay for communication costs. Some students with critical problems were supported financially and given shelter. Emotional support was given through counselling which was patronized by a lot of students.”

Prof. Charles Barnor: “At an executive meeting, we decided that there was the need to adapt to the current crisis and prepare for post-COVID-19 as well. Many strategies were implemented to ensure that quality was not compromised. Connectivity, location and access were issues we had to address. We spoke to the telecommunication networks (MTN & Vodafone) and the zero-rated educational website we were using so that students can use the links for free.”

Kader Kaneye: “No payment has been made by students since COVID-19 started. In Niger, most students, especially those from the middle to upper-class families, go abroad to study. This year because of COVID-19, people are less likely to study abroad for various reasons. For us, it’s how ADU can position in such a short time that ADU is where these students would think of coming to. For us, it’s an opportunity for people not to look abroad for education.”

Prof. Baylie Yeshita: “The donor community supported greatly. Some students from really poor backgrounds were given access to food and transportation.”



Find session proceedings here

SESSION INSIGHTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

What next? Implications of our new normal on teaching and learning in Africa

Session Abstract

During COVID-19, higher-ed institutions with prior face-to-face instructional pedagogies redesigned courses to suit online teaching and learning. What are some of the techniques we can recycle to improve teaching and learning? This session unpacked the approaches adopted in this period and what it holds for the future of instruction in African higher education institutions. How do we teach and interact with students in the new normal?

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Essential ways to teach and engage students online

To improve students' participation in online teaching, teachers should practice enhancing student engagement, connecting with students, and congratulating students for their achievements. Studies have shown that even in the online environment, energy and joy is contagious. Lecturers should share their positive energy so students can feed off their energy. The problem of monotony in sessions can be solved in a number of ways. When using applications like Zoom, lecturers can use polls, the chat box, or breakout rooms to make lessons engaging. Applications Slido or Word cloud also allow students to answer questions.

Additionally, lessons should be delivered with a personal touch so lecturers can easily create a connection with students and get them to pay attention. Some of the ways they can do this is talking about things they have in common with students or asking about their week, as well as recognizing and applauding their efforts through small rewards like t-shirts. This will encourage other students to engage more in class. Students should also have access to lecturers during their active office hours and this makes it easy to address specific issues.



Find session proceedings here

SESSION INSIGHTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Integrating immersive learning methods: The future of higher education

Session Abstract

Local and regional universities are best suited to solve the pressing needs of learners today, but if they do not adapt quickly, their value proposition will not be enough to serve students, and competitors will take their place. This is the best opportunity we have had in decades to re-design higher ed. This session addressed how embedding learning by doing into academic design is essential for our future as higher-ed institutions.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Why is immersive learning the future of higher education?

Immersive learning is a better way to learn because it prepares students for industry work. Here's why immersive learning is the future of higher ed:

We learn from reflecting on what we experience

Teachers especially, learn more than anyone else because they have to know it well enough to teach it. Teaching it means giving students the same experience. Typically, teachers don't allow failure but that's how students learn. Students are not given a lot of chances to apply what they learn because teachers are willing to show them how to learn rather than allowing them to be curious and self-directed, which are components of experiential learning. Students are more likely to remember what they learn when they experience it themselves.

Immersive learning helps build and bridge the skills gap

68 or 65 percent of CEOs in Africa say that they cannot innovate like they want to because they don't have the right skills. Many university programs continue to emphasize memorization and rote learning. However, students who go through experiential learning programs, completely change this narrative.

We learn better when we are ready to learn

We are motivated when we are curious, and we learn better when we are intrinsically motivated. However, current higher educational systems are designed such that motivation is extrinsic. Typically, students are told to do good work or else they would get a bad grade and if they do not get good grades, then they would not graduate. These are all extrinsic motivators. Immersive learning encourages intrinsic motivation because students are in charge of their own learning.

We learn best when we are in authentic situations.

We learn more from the real thing than from a substitute. This means students are more likely to appreciate the learning process and learn better when what they are being taught is closer to what it is in the real world. This is why experiential learning is more beneficial for students.



[Find session proceedings here](#)

SESSION INSIGHTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Re-thinking remote access online for students with disability

Session Abstract

As schools adopt remote learning channels during this COVID-19 pandemic, are the needs of students with disabilities being fully considered? What are some of the opportunities that these transitions have presented for the inclusion of students with disabilities, and what are some of the challenges faced in developing institutions' capabilities to support in this period? This session addressed some lessons and practicalities the future holds for instruction and administration of higher-ed in Africa.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Emerging opportunities for students with disabilities and identifying setbacks

Mr. Alex Williams: "Over the years of discussing the barriers of persons with disabilities in education, the main issue has not been accessing the appropriate resources but the attitude of those who provide education. Getting them to think about and include individuals with disabilities is the main issue."

Angela Affran: "These students are a part of us and they need to make it through the ranks of education to succeed in life. But there is a denial. We are excited that there is the opportunity now to correct the wrongs. How do we support them? We need to ensure inclusive quality education for all. We have to tailor education to suit them. There should be accessibility."

Derrick Omari: "Prior to COVID-19, 25% of persons with disabilities made it to university according to research by a student of the University of Ghana. This is not different in other African countries. UNESCO reported that only 5% of adults with disabilities can read or write in Africa. It is a big gap in education for persons with disabilities. The transition to online widens the gap even more than the opportunities it presents. WHO reports that 20% of persons with disabilities who are poor are from developing countries in Africa."

Technology for persons with disabilities and stakeholder support

Angela Affran: “One area we need to look at is the design of websites for uploading content to make it easy for students with visual impairment. Teachers must also be trained on how to use the e-learning platforms to support our students.”

Mr. Alex Williams: “Technology allows us to factor in the need of various forms of disabilities. At the University of Ghana, we run psychiatry programs for e-learning. We have also made sure that the disabilities protocol in relation to students undergoing assessment is also followed. Once a student’s peculiar need is identified, it is communicated to the lecturer for support.”

Derrick Omari: “I have realized that this transition places a lot of emphasis on how indispensable technology has become in educating persons with disabilities. Even teaching IT literacy in popular blind schools is a challenge because of bureaucracy. The time has come for us to think about incorporating technology in educating persons with disabilities. Even if we advocate for access to technology these students will still face barriers because they won’t know how to use them.”

Educational development for persons with disabilities and national-level implementation

Angela Affran: “I am currently working on research with UNICEF on what we call the universal design for learning. This is a program that looks at every student in the classroom and tries to put into place a system where all students will have access to the subjects in class but by different ways of doing it. It will look at multiple means of engagement, representation, access, and expression so that all students will be included. We are talking to the government to work around including this in the curriculum. The bottom line is that the opportunity has come for us to make a change. No child should be left behind so they also have access to quality education.”

Derrick Omari: “We need to help parents understand what the child needs and how to provide them support. Where parents are not available, support workers should be made available for support. There has to be a relationship between employers and universities on how to train students to be prepared for the workplace. How do we ensure that students remain relevant? We should explore internships. This will help students to know and understand the possible barriers they will face at the workplace. From this experience parents, institutions and employers can work together to develop sustainable opportunities for persons with disabilities.”

Mr. Alex Williams: “We must pay attention to the principles of the SDGs, which is to leave no one behind. Policy Makers and implementers must ensure this happens. Students with disabilities must also play a part. From where I sit, technology has provided more opportunity for us. At the University of Ghana, 85% of persons with disabilities use computers to take examinations.”



Find session proceedings here

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE WORLD OF WORK DURING THE NEW NORMAL

Session Abstract

A World Bank [report](#) in 2017 indicated that changes in technology, information, and related developments are creating corresponding changes in the world of work on the continent. The present pandemic has fast-tracked this change with the emergence of new forms of work; with remote working revealing new possibilities for expenditure and resource management. The nature of work post-COVID19 will likely take on a new look that will require new strategies for talent and career development.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Ways to prepare students for the future

1. Student and knowledge

Faculty and administrators must collectively have conversations with students to connect the dots. For example, having students work on one project that involves applying knowledge from different subject areas. That way, they are exposed to agile thinking and acquire multiple skills that will make them versatile.

Use project management tools to help students get used to multi-tasking.

2. Engaging people in the industry

Students in office-related research and projects by the career service department.

Putting together more library resources and online collections for students is a great way to learn broadly and across disciplines.

Supporting students in a trust-based economy

- ◆ The new workspace requires people who are ethical. Personal discipline and ethics should be intentional and taught to students.
- ◆ Set up projects and help students build personal discipline
- ◆ Engage parents in career day and in student projects. This will guide parents to support students while they work at home.
- ◆ Shift focus from multi-tasking to multi-discipline by supporting students to be skilled in various fields.
- ◆ Student organisations should run like real organisations by simulating what's happening in the real world of work to make their transition from school to work easier.

[Find session proceedings here](#)



ABOUT THE EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE

An initiative of Ashesi University, the Education Collaborative enables the systemic transformation of higher education in Africa by developing a network of exemplar institutions that work with stakeholders to achieve extraordinary student outcomes. The goal is to build these exemplar institutions to peer mentor other institutions and transform them to become exemplars. The network advocates for and contributes to regulatory reforms to integrate the best educational practices. Over time, the network will establish systems for higher education institutions and stakeholders to calibrate an institution's progress to becoming an exemplar. We help higher education institutions to become student-centred, innovative, and continually relevant, and uphold these shared values:

- Ethics and leadership development in students
- Training students for relevant career readiness
- Enabling an active entrepreneurship ecosystem
- An active system for 360 accountability to the transformation of the continent

Since its inception in 2017, the Education Collaborative has successfully engaged 34 institutions in face-to-face convenings and is mentoring two institutions. The initiative is already, directly and indirectly, impacting more than 150 educators and over 3500 students in more than 10 countries in Africa.

CONTACT US AND KEEP UPDATED



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