ICT and distance learning in tertiary education institutions during COVID-19 induced school closure

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Sharing of information and experiences – Kenya

Robert Oboko, PhD
University of Nairobi
Agenda

• Background
• Status of Distance Learning Before COVID-19
• University Response
• Capacity Building for Educators during this period
• Government support
• Challenges and Opportunities
Background

• Kenya has a longstanding tradition of distance learning – paper based classes e.g. University of Nairobi, Strathmore and Mount Kenya

• Since the last decade successful efforts in ICT-enabled distance learning- Most universities have ODEL units – University of Nairobi, Maseno, Moi, Jomo Kenyatta, Daystar, USIU

• In a survey by KENET on mode of preference for learning among learners in 44 universities in Kenya in 2019, 57% preferred blended learning while 3.3% preferred pure online learning

• Orientation towards learning with ICT was there

• Paper-based and ICT enabled distance learning during school term for module 4 learners and face to face holiday learning also popular in Kenya tertiary institutions
Majority of the universities in Kenya have an ODEL unit
They have courses and programs available but mostly for on campus students
Some success stories in use of distance learning beyond Kenyan boundaries are in University of Nairobi, Maseno University and the AMREF university
Some already examine students by e-means such as University of Nairobi and Maseno
Policy for bring your own device (BYOD) (laptop) and a laptop as a requirement in many universities in Kenya
Use: Blended on campus and holiday programs (Mod 4)
Availability of blended learning environments / courses: Although the students preferred blended learning, the e-readiness survey results (KENET, 2019) show that blended courses were not widely available. 38% had not taken a blended course and 40% a few (78%)
36% of students had taken a pure online course – university of other courses from MOOCS – Potential for such learning
University Response

• Universities were suddenly ordered by the government to close
• Training of all faculty members on online teaching tools
• Took up offers for free training tools: Webex, MIT courseware, ...
• Created institutional emails for learners to facilitate enlistment for the courses
• Developed guidelines for virtual examination of projects
• Provided staff and learners with internet bundles – safaricom or TelkomKenya
• Mostly synchronous training as there was no time for instructional design and course conversion for electronic learning
• Decision to complete academic year that was a few weeks to the end by online teaching
Government Support

• Kenya has signed an agreement with Google Loon
• To provide internet access to Kenyans as they work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.
• Targets rural areas with 4G connection
• Through Telkom Kenya
• CUE required that new programs or revised programs in universities incorporate the use of Blended Learning as a means for delivery
Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

• Large classes not so manageable with the available technologies
• Learners in rural areas not well catered for – no electricity in some areas, poor network connections and the cost of bundles
• Most lecturers are using synchronous sessions as they had not prepared interactive materials for asynchronous learning
• Learners with disabilities (hearing, seeing) not well catered for
• Learner resistance partly due to the psycho-social climate – uncertainty
• How to administer examinations

Opportunities

• Many members of faculty now believe they can integrate technologies into teaching and learning
• Students accept this as an alternative way of learning- from the lowest levels to university
• If used in blended version, it might increase availability of lecturers to students, especially those who travel a lot on research engagements
END

• THANK YOU
• Asante Sana