EQUITABLE ACCESS

Providing Education To All

THE CHALLENGE OF DELIVERING EQUITABLE ACCESS

Access to high quality higher and further education is often reserved for the privileged minority of students across the Middle East and Africa. For the less fortunate students from low income families and those attending underperforming schools, their post education future is uncertain. Inequitable access to education perpetuates cycles of poverty, exclusion and inequality.

Equitable access is the idea that all students should receive the same level of education, regardless of their background, economic status, or location they're learning in.

A lack of suitable, modern infrastructure, overburdened systems and poor learning outcomes are the present-day reality for millions of students.
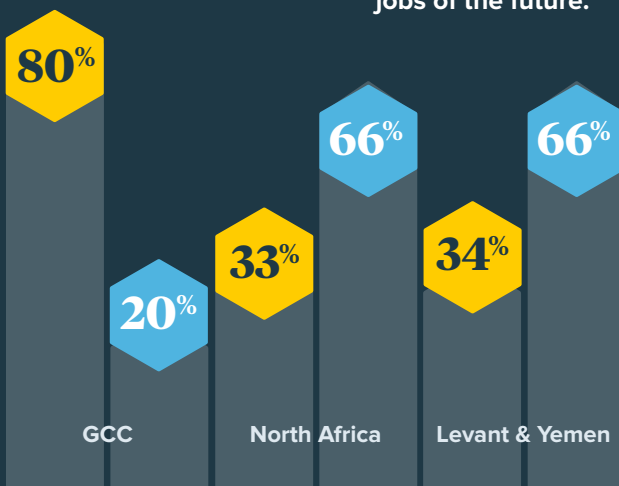
Inequitable access can have direct and indirect impacts on students and their communities, with research showing that even one additional year of education could see a nation's GDP grow from 2-5% and provide the student with 10% more earnings over a lifetime[1].

Disparity in access to education is especially high across the Middle East and Africa. An Arab Youth Survey reports two-thirds of students in Northern Africa, The Levant and Yemen felt that the education system did not prepare them for their future[2].

80% of Arab students in the Gulf States believe they are **being prepared** for the **jobs of the future**, which is more than double that of students in **Northern Africa**, **The Levant** and **Yemen**.
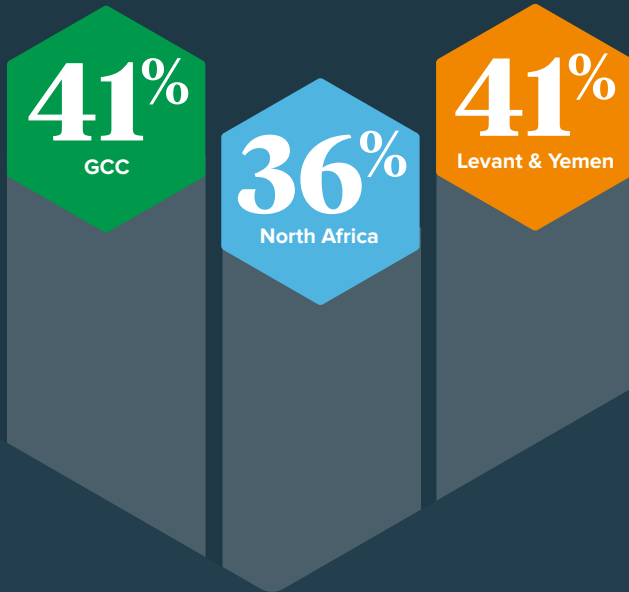
Regional split of how satisfied Arab students are with the preparation for jobs of the future.

- Satisfied
- Not Satisfied

	Satisfied	Not Satisfied
GCC	80%	20%
North Africa	33%	66%
Levant & Yemen	34%	66%

[1] https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/stories-four-continents
[2] https://arab.org/arab-youth-survey-2017/

Regional split of how concerned Arab students are with the quality of their education.

41%
GCC

36%
North Africa

41%
Levant & Yemen

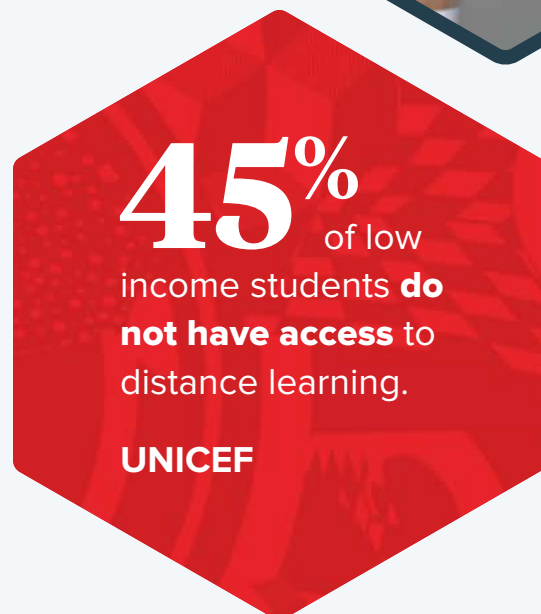## Quality of education is a growing concern amongst Arab students.

Low-income families

Low income is commonly a strong predictor of low educational performance.

In South Africa for example[3], research shows that students from poorer neighbourhoods are less likely to have access to the resources they need to learn, with larger class sizes, fewer textbooks, and less space to study.

Equally, research[4] carried out in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar, Syria and Tunisia by UNICEF found that 45% of low-income students do not have access to distance learning, which means those from poorer and rural communities risk being left behind altogether.

45% of low income students **do not have access** to distance learning.

UNICEF

3 https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2020/05/29/covid-19-south-africa-unequal-schooling-education-system-inequality/
4 https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/10231/file/Impact%20of%20COVID%20on%20Children-Snapshot%20report.pdf%20.pdf

Students at underperforming schools

Another group of students who are disproportionally affected by equitable access is those who study at underperforming, or low income schools, where a lack of technology is a major contributing factor to lower levels of education.

In African countries such as Algeria and Tunisia, only one computer is available per five students[5]. In the Middle East around 45% of secondary school students are not learning crucial foundational skills due to schools not having the right resources, digital tools, or teaching expertise which significantly impacts their ability to progress into further or higher education.

Certain MENA countries have also been affected by civil unrest and war which drastically reduces education levels due to a lack of formal infrastructure.

More than 8,850 education facilities across Syria, Iraq, and Yemen have been destroyed, cutting students off from education completely due to the absence of other learning methods.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

Success in labour markets increases with further education so inequitable access means students are trapped in unemployment, with lower labour force participation rates, lower earnings, and poorer working conditions[6].

It also has broader cultural and societal impacts, where countries with low levels of higher and further education also failing to equip their populations with necessary skill sets for future economic development.

One example of this is Saudi Arabia; 76% of adults do not have a tertiary education[7], which is significantly higher than the OECD average of 62%, and the nation falls far short of the global average on key metrics such as skill sets, employability, human-focused environment, and equal opportunities[8].

However tertiary education rates are improving in the region, in 2017 first-time entry rates increased to 66% for bachelor's programmes.

> Good quality education has the power to change the life of a person, a community and the future of the planet. It is a fundamental human right of every woman, man and child - no matter who and where they are.
>
> **UNESCO**

Tertiary educational attainment of 25-64 year olds

24%
Saudi Arabia

38%
OECD

5 https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/stories-four-continents#:~:text=Good%20quality%20education%20has%20the,who%20and%20where%20they%20are.
6 Economic vulnerability among low-educated europeans: resource, composition, labour market and welfare state influences, Gesthuizen, M., Scheepers, 2010
7 https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019_CN_SAU.pdf
8 https://www.bcg.com/publications/2020/alleviating-the-heavy-toll-of-the-global-skills-mismatch
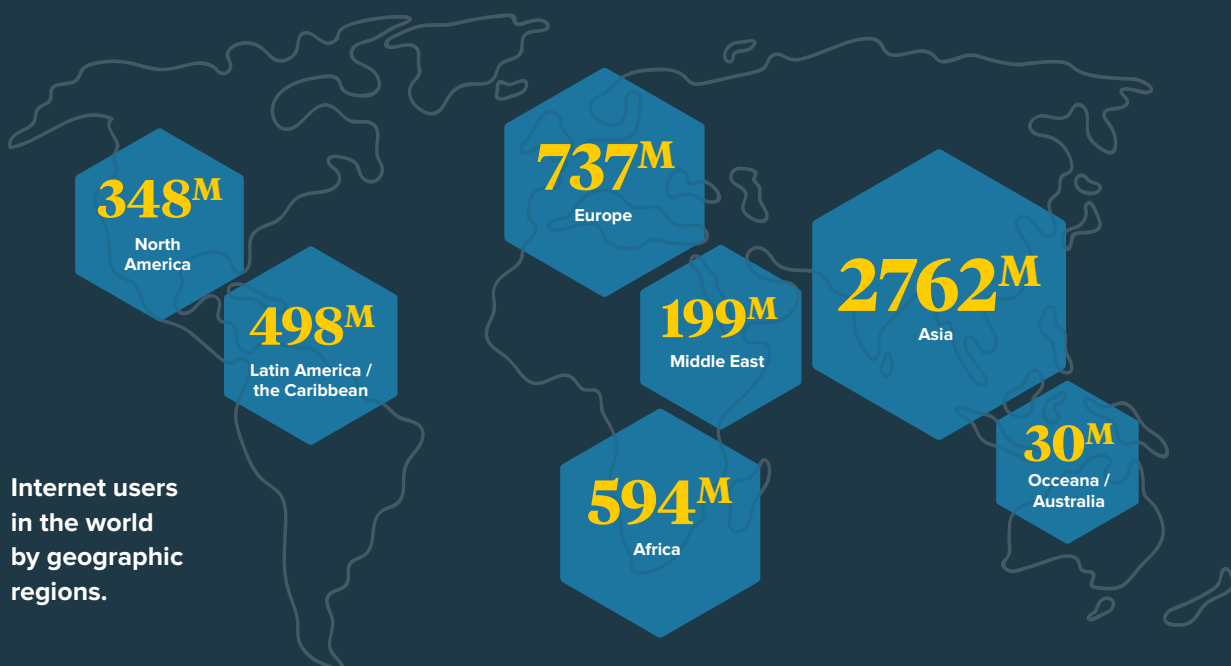
UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

Resolving the problem of inequitable access demands a clear understanding of the challenges that each student is facing. These may be institutional, technology or skills based.

Lack of digital literacy

A lack of basic digital literacy skills is one of the main factors of increasing unemployment levels. This continues to be a challenge as scaling up the skill set and increasing capability is still not prioritised in low-income countries - mainly due to a lack of funds and resources.

Improving digital skills is one of the most important investments institutions and governments can make to increase education participation, higher education attainment and employability.

348^M
North America

498^M
Latin America / the Caribbean

737^M
Europe

199^M
Middle East

2762^M
Asia

30^M
Occeana / Australia

594^M
Africa

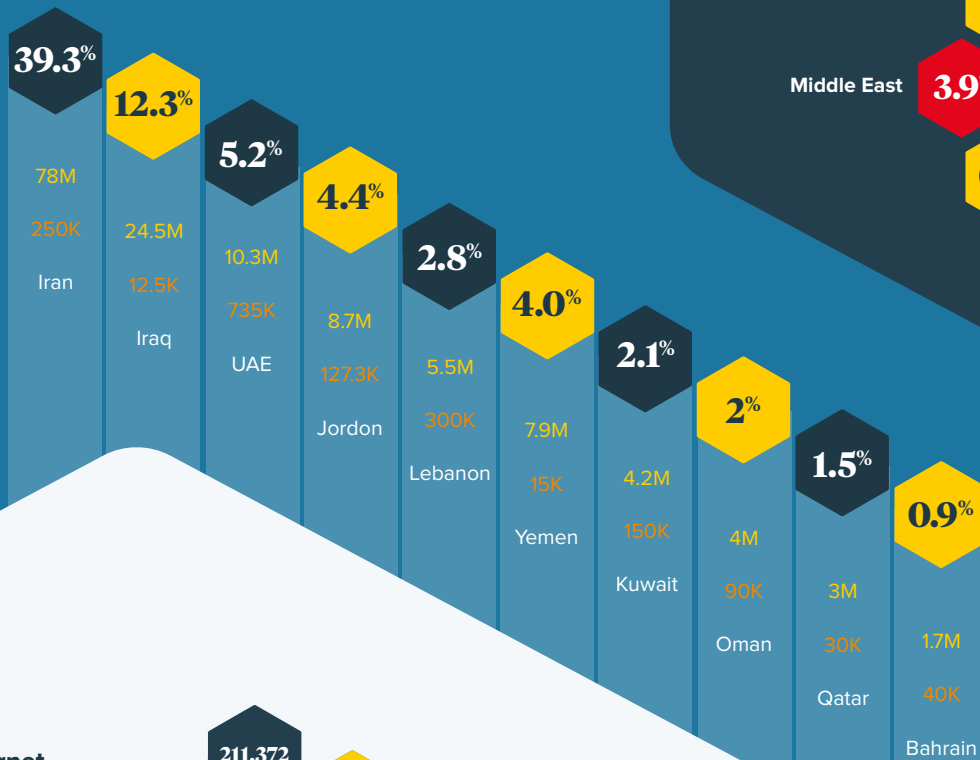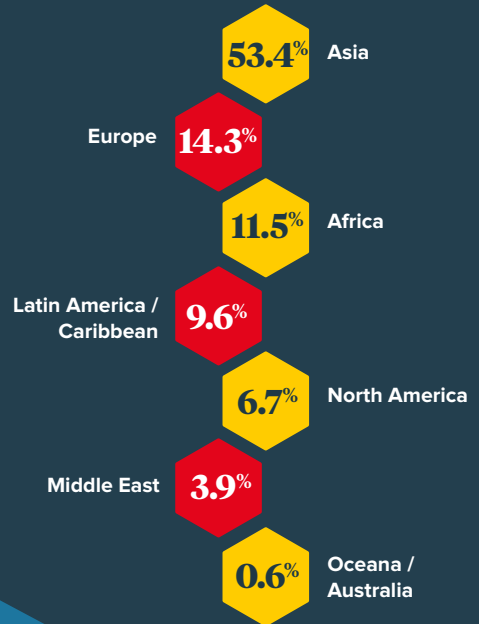**Internet users in the world by geographic regions.**

Digital literacy often goes hand in hand with access to digital means, and despite Africa making up 17.6% of the worlds population, the continent only accounts for 11.5% of global internet users.

By comparison, the Middle East has a higher percentage of internet distribution (3.9%) compared to its population of the world (3.4%). However Africa has the highest growth rate of internet users since the start of the century with 13.2%, which is more than double that of the Middle East at 6.1%[9].
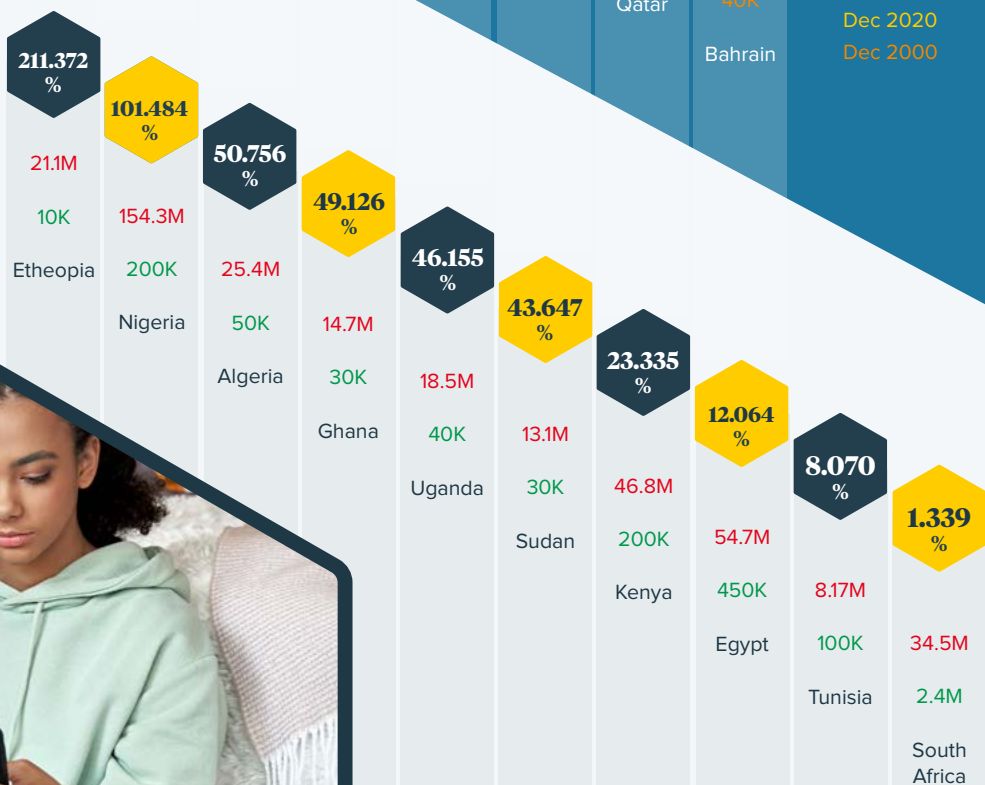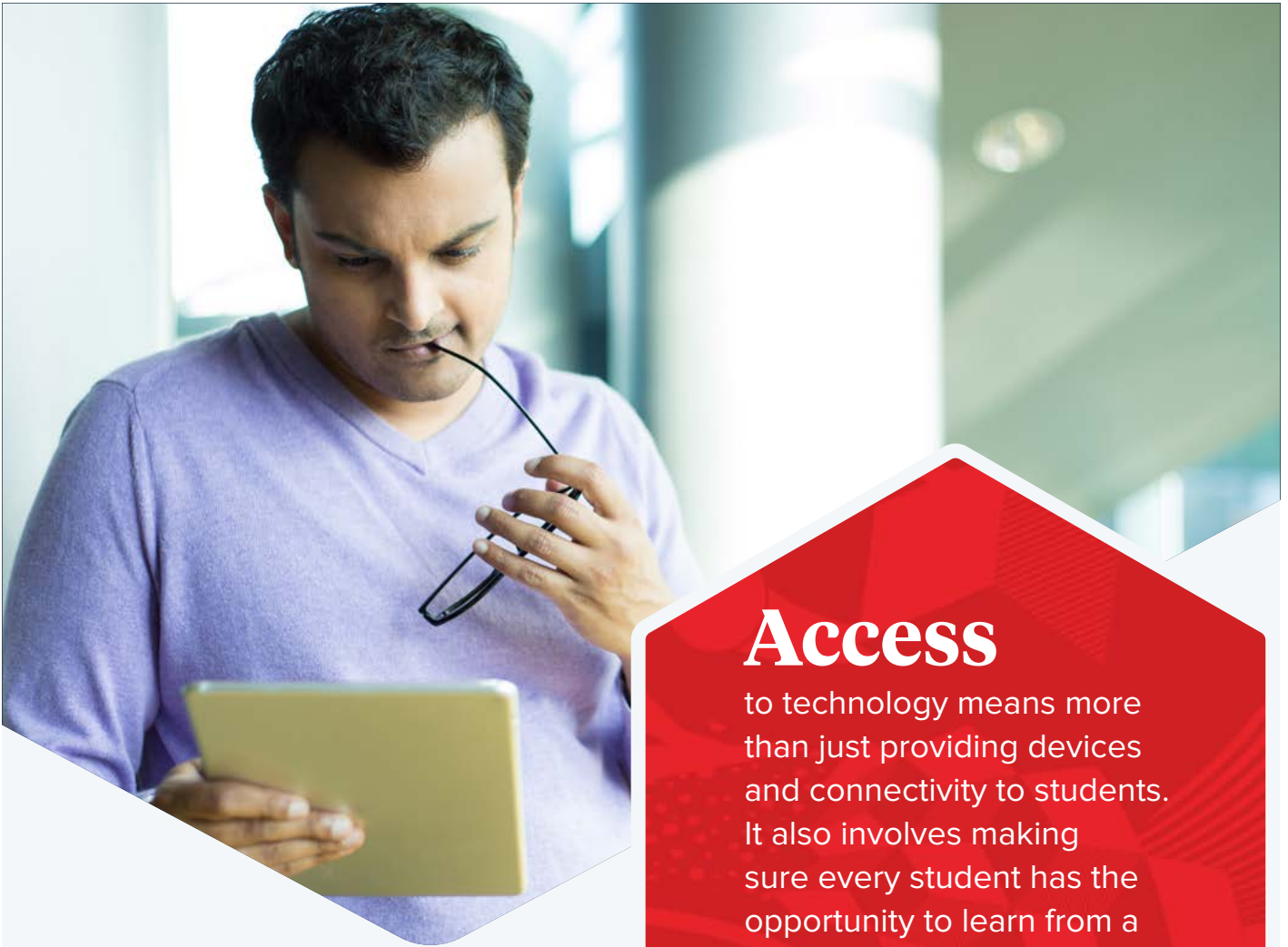
World internet users distribution in 2021

53.4%	Asia
14.3% Europe	
11.5%	Africa
9.6% Latin America / Caribbean	
6.7%	North America
3.9% Middle East	
0.6%	Oceana / Australia

Internet user growth in the Middle East.

Dec 2020
Dec 2000

%	M	K	Country
39.3%	78M	250K	Iran
12.3%	24.5M	12.5K	Iraq
5.2%	10.3M	735K	UAE
4.4%	8.7M	127.3K	Jordon
2.8%	5.5M	300K	Lebanon
4.0%	7.9M	15K	Yemen
2.1%	4.2M	150K	Kuwait
2%	4M	90K	Oman
1.5%	3M	30K	Qatar
0.9%	1.7M	40K	Bahrain

Internet user growth in Africa.

Dec 2020
Dec 2000

%	Dec 2020	Dec 2000	Country
211.372%	21.1M	10K	Etheopia
101.484%	154.3M	200K	Nigeria
50.756%	25.4M	50K	Algeria
49.126%	14.7M	30K	Ghana
46.155%	18.5M	40K	Uganda
43.647%	13.1M	30K	Sudan
23.335%	46.8M	200K	Kenya
12.064%	54.7M	450K	Egypt
8.070%	8.17M	100K	Tunisia
1.339%	34.5M	2.4M	South Africa

Access

to technology means more than just providing devices and connectivity to students. It also involves making sure every student has the opportunity to learn from a teacher who understands how to use technology.

Changing access needs

Student requirements have changed around the world and providing access to the tools students require is now one of the most pressing considerations for educators.

Some disadvantaged students may not have the same access to equipment and information at home as more affluent students, which is why it's so important for educators to bridge the gap and provide the same support to all.

It's also the case that some students simply won't have access to the tools they need to study when they are not physically present on campus. Educators need platforms that are agile and can deliver learning, provide convenient access to resources and meet students where they are now – whether that's at home, in a classroom, or on-the-go.

Students who don't have the latest IT equipment at home or powerful enough computers to access specialist software or other resources can still do so via a web-based portal to continue their education.

There are valuable lessons to be learned from universities both within and outside of the region.

In Wales, Swansea University uses digital solutions to ensure equitable access to specialist tools for students who were learning remotely away from campus.

Personalised learning

Every student has a different academic level. Some educators may find it is easier to identify students that are struggling in the classroom and offer additional support, and with the increase in blended learning, may feel it's not as easy for them to pick up struggling students, however with the right educational technology, hybrid and digital learning platforms, like Canvas, can improve personalised learning, in fact they can help teachers better identify students in need and allow them to offer targeted support.

New methods of teaching should prioritise each student as an individual, delivering content and instruction that's appropriate to their own performance and needs. This will stop certain students from falling behind and ensures that every student gets the education level they require.

To do this, institutions need to understand their students – which can be challenging without the right tools. The University of Cape Town asked their student body directly via a Student Access Survey.

Armed with input from students outlining barriers that they were facing in accessing education, the University has been able to develop appropriate solutions, such as providing data bundles and designing an academic framework which reflected how many hours students could realistically expect to study away from campus.

By additionally arranging for access to education sites via mobile at no cost to the student, the University of Cape Town has been able to ensure that the modern parameters of equitable access were met, in delivering necessary digital infrastructure and devices to enable remote learning in even rural and poor communities.

Learn from anywhere

As times change and more reliance is put on technology and digital devices, educators have a duty to embrace new opportunities to level up access to education.

Industry-leading mobile applications are being developed that can deliver all the quality of learning in a classroom from a mobile device. With full-featured responsive designs and interactive learning methods used, students can have ultimate accessibility no matter where they are learning from.

At the Far Eastern University of the Philippines, Canvas makes this notion a reality. It gives students fingertip access to their classes via a mobile app, meaning a 4am commute to school can be filled with remote learning. When students can learn from anywhere, there's more likely to realise their academic potential and complete higher or further education in full.

Canvas gives students **fingertip access to their classes** via a mobile app "

THE SOLUTION

The gaps in equitable access for students can cause many issues in terms of academic performance, which can have long-lasting, socioeconomic impacts well into adult life.

Additionally, equitable access gaps prevent higher and further education institutions from effectively delivering their curriculums and providing a conducive learning environment for all students and learners. This in turn can impact on student attainment and institution performance levels.

Technology makes learning mobile and accessible

It is increasingly clear that mobile is a powerful way to bridge the equitable access gap.

In much of sub-Saharan Africa, mobile phone ownership is more common than electricity[10] and is increasing quickly. Industry body GSMA reports that 46% of the population subscribed to mobile services at the end of 2020, an increase of 20 million people year-on-year.

Mobile providers in the region are keenly aware of the important role mobile services can play for vulnerable and remote communities, with many offering discounted access along with digital resources to allow individuals and businesses to go online[11].

This mobile infrastructure is hugely powerful and can be leveraged for learning, making cloud-based learning, teaching resources, tutoring, assessment, and teacher support more readily accessible to all students, in the palm of their hand.

For education institutions, embracing mobile tools makes it possible to offer consistent access to educators and remove physical barriers to learning.

Similarly, in locations where Wi-Fi coverage is good, it can be used to offer equitable access to all students.

More and more countries across Africa and the Middle East are taking steps to improve Wi-Fi capability, with some doing so specifically to improve education standards.

[10] https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/11/08/in-much-of-sub-saharan-africa-mobile-phones-are-more-common-than-access-to-electricity
[11] https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/sub-saharan-africa/

In Saudi Arabia, the Vision 2030 initiative is a multi-year programme which seeks to bring about economic and social transformation while strategically reducing the nation's reliance on oil and gas.

World Bank figures[12] suggest 91% of the population is already covered by mobile broadband 4G networks and 3 million homes are connected to fixed broadband. Investment in digital infrastructure will see connectivity and resources increased further, with more 5G networks and greater broadband access.

The infrastructure exists to make learning more accessible – and with the right tools, provides a framework to ensure equitable access becomes a reality.

$615^{BN} of economic value added will be generated by mobile technologies and services by 2025. In 2020, transactions on mobile money platforms reached $490 billion.

615^M people in Sub-Saharan Africa will subscribe to mobile services by 2025, equivalent to 50% of the region's population.

28% of total connections will be on 4G by 2025 and 3% will be 5G.

INTRODUCING CANVAS

The Instructure Learning Platform is an all-in-one solution helping educators and administrators to create custom online learning environments, boost student engagement and amplify every learning experience using mobile and Wi-Fi technology.

Canvas is the Learning Management System within the Platform and supports all students, allowing them to attain higher grades, help prepare them for career readiness by integrating specialist tools, practical solutions and creating a safe and effective learning environment for students, we believe that Canvas will be instrumental in both shaping and protecting the future of education.

As a cloud-based system, Canvas lends itself perfectly to applications in the Middle East and Africa. It acts as the connective tissue which brings together students and educators using existing mobile and digital infrastructure, no matter the location.

How Canvas can help institutions provide education to all

Canvas gives students who can't be present in class uninterrupted access to their curriculum, educators and school resources via mobile or Wi-Fi at their location.

Content can be created and recorded offline, even when mobile networks or Wi-Fi signals are not available, and then uploaded when it is.

Content such as assignments, video and resources can be downloaded when mobile and Wi-Fi access is available, to work through at another location or time.

When students and educators are back online, one-to-one and group learning exercises, feedback and assessments can be done live.

Educators can use Canvas to create dynamic and engaging learning experiences for all students.

Canvas helps teachers to be more productive, with more teaching time and less time spent dealing with admin.

It enables more interactivity and collaboration for better learning outcomes.

For more information on Instructure, and our bespoke, accessible response to the modern-day challenges affecting students and educators, visit:

instructure.com/en-gb/canvas

Deliver better teaching and learning experiences with Canvas

LEARN MORE →

instructure.com/en-gb/canvas

INSTRUCTURE

Powering the World's Smartest Classrooms.

Instructure is an education technology company dedicated to helping everyone learn together. We amplify the power of teaching and elevate the learning process, leading to improved student outcomes. Today, Instructure supports more than 30 million educators and learners at more than 6,000 organisations around the world.

The Instructure Learning Platform makes learning more personal and student success more equitable by delivering the solutions you need to support, enrich, and connect every aspect of teaching and learning. The Instructure Learning Platform for higher education includes:

Canvas by Instructure: bringing together Canvas LMS, video engagement with Canvas Studio, a branded course catalog system by Canvas Catalog.

Impact by Instructure: helping teachers and students adopt educational technology to promote deeper engagement with learning while guaranteeing the campus edtech ecosystem is utilized to its fullest potential.

Learn more
instructure.com/en-gb/canvas

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