



Business Division : Pearson South Africa
Format : Opinion Piece
Spokesperson : Dr Benadette Aineamani
Topic and angle : Higher education will need support to bridge the digital gap

Higher education in South Africa will need support to bridge the digital gap

By Dr Benadette Aineamani, Director: Product & Services, Pearson Africa

Apart from its devastating impact COVID-19 has had on healthcare and economic stability, education is perhaps the most sorely affected sector of our society. Physical access to education was fundamentally restricted for the better part of 2020 with online learning tools played an essential role in keeping education alive.

Dr Benadette Aineamani, Director: Product and Services, Africa from the world's learning company, Pearson South Africa, says we are fortunate that our Matric pass rate only dropped by 5.1% but says that the long-term impact of COVID-19 will forever change the higher education learning landscape for those matriculants moving on to continue their educational journey.

"2021 will mark the year of digital for universities and colleges. Whether we like it or not, whether students have sufficient access, the internet has now become our country's biggest lecture hall."

Although Dr Aineamani believes this destination was an inevitable educational evolution, she says we can't ignore the unprecedented shortcuts we were all forced to take to reach this point. "When things are rushed, people get left behind and, in this case, this includes both students and higher education institutions. The adoption of online learning will, however, persist as the education market evolves."

Dr Aineamani says it is imperative that we help these students and institutions succeed. "At Pearson we understand the important role lecturers play and the challenges that lie ahead, which is why we are reimagining learning through a suite of effective content, services and solutions designed to help students flourish."

Working with lecturers, we continually question and improve our content, digital solutions and learning services to ensure that our products have the most positive impact on learning. “Our authors are respected experts in their fields, providing trusted content and the expansion of eLearning platforms compliments the physical presence of a campus, providing a dynamic and nurturing learning environment in which your students can thrive,” says Dr Aineamani.

Pearson South Africa has longstanding partnerships with several Higher Education institutions wherein our digital products in the form of our MyLabs & Mastering as well as our eBooks are being widely utilised. In recent months, Pearson has worked with new faculties at existing partner institutions to increase our footprint as well as work with new institutions to introduce our digital products. Given the sharp increase in appetite for digital, Pearson has taken leaps forward in the creation of new products such as our Pearson Horizon platform which launched in the market in 2020. More recently, we are currently working on local versions of these products to answer the need for localised digital content.

With the fourth industrial revolution a hot topic in Africa and our increased digital dependency taking hold, Dr Aineamani says now is the time to transform. “Not only do we have the task of navigating this progression. We have the unprecedented challenge of bridging a gap left by a global pandemic that has left education a year behind. Now is the time to come together and find solutions that work.”

Learn more about how Pearson can help usher higher education into a digital future.

-Ends

512 words

About Pearson

Learning is the most powerful force for change in the world. More than 20,000 Pearson employees deliver our products and services in nearly 200 countries, all working towards a common purpose – to help everyone achieve their potential through learning. We do that by providing high quality, digital content and learning experiences, as well as assessments and qualifications that help people build their skills and grow with the world around them. We are the world’s leading learning company. **Learn more at za.pearson.com**