**Address barriers to digital learning, growth**

Today, the world celebrates the International Day of Education. Education is the bedrock of development, with human capital critical to economic and social development.

Skills is one of the pillars of the Kenya government’s Digital Economy Blueprint launched in 2019. During the Covid-19 pandemic, education has been both significantly disrupted, and significantly transformed.

We must reflect and pick education for the future to grow digital economy and achieve Vision 2030.

According to a study by the World Bank, it is estimated that interruptions to school and learning are projected to result in losses valued at $15 trillion.

This is in terms of affected children’s future earnings and in long-lasting impacts on well-being and life prospects, particularly for the most disadvantaged learners.

The majority want to see the events of Covid-19 that started in early 2020 behind us. Not only did the pandemic exacerbate inequalities in education and learning across the country but it also laid bare the challenges within the sector, especially in regards to readiness and preparedness.

The theme for this year’s Day of Education is “Changing Course, Transforming Education”.

Technology has played a significant role in transforming education, especially growth in online learning.

According to a study by Unesco, at the beginning of the pandemic it was estimated that, globally, 826 million students were without household computers, 706 million lacked internet at home and another 56 million lacked 3G/4G network coverage.

**Great risk**

Without adequate ICT devices, internet connectivity, education resources, or teacher training, virtual learning fails. This provides a great risk for more students being left behind and increasing inequalities.

In Kenya, network operators provide 4G networks that cover more than 96 percent of the population and are rapidly expanding last-mile fibre to homes.

This was particularly timely given the transition to working and studying remotely.

The Ministry of Education provided remote teaching support using the internet, radio and television while encouraging academic institutions to use teaching materials that create a more accessible online learning environment.

Many network operators provided free or subsidised access to the government’s Kenya Education Cloud and private sector education websites.

The Ajira Program through the Ministry of ICT has provided access to learning resources to youth online, allowing tens of thousands of youth to upskill, gain certification and gainful online employment.

Education technology (EdTech) has thus enabled remote leaning and education. With the penetration of mobile technology in developing markets, EdTech has the potential to give millions of students an opportunity to learn now and in the future.

Huawei has continued to play a key role in providing learning resources through our multiple digital skills programmes.

**Electricity access**

As we look to the future, it is critical that we continue to ensure online learning becomes the norm, enabling learning anytime and anywhere.

To do this, we must also address barriers that became painfully clear during the pandemic, such as enhancing access to devices, electricity and digital skills.

It is also critical to improve the use of technology in schools. It is encouraging that the government plans to connect many more schools.

As a country, we have made significant strides in ensuring learning never stopped during the pandemic and we have seen the possibilities for what learning in future could look like.

On the International Day of Education, we must all commit to making it a priority to use technology to improve equity, access and quality of learning for all, so that the country and every Kenyan can reach their full potential to enable the development of digital economy.

<https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/opinion-analysis/letters/address-barriers-to-digital-learning-growth-3691922>