**The African Edtech solutions empowering tomorrow’s future leaders**

The COVID-19 crisis has irrevocably changed education. At the outset of the pandemic, 180+ countries mandated temporary school closures, leaving about 1.6 billion children and youth out of school and affecting approximately 85% of children world-wide.

All countries were able to deploy remote learning technologies using a combination of TV, radio, online and mobile platforms. Currently, most countries are working towards re-opening schools, but there will still be intermittent closures and use of hybrid learning.

However, school closures and limited access to remote learning means that learning poverty is likely to worsen from 53% to 63% especially in low-income countries.

“This begs the question: how can technology help today’s children and the adults of tomorrow?” says Jo Griffiths Co-founder of the [Global Innovation Initiative Group (GIIG)](https://giig.africa/?utm_source=Coverage+&utm_medium=Press+Release&utm_campaign=EdTech), the exclusive rights holder of the [Global Startup Awards (GSA) Africa](https://www.globalstartupawards.com/africanstartupawards?utm_source=Coverage+&utm_medium=Press+Release&utm_campaign=EdTech) – the first and only continent-wide Sustainable Development Goal-aligned tech innovation competition

[iSchool](http://www.ischooltech.com/), Northern Africa Regional Winner has created an online education platform for 6-18 year olds, with over 8,000 graduates and 100+ coding coaches. The platform has recently become both STEM and AI accredited and has been voted in the Top 10 EdTech startups in the world.

Mohamed Algawish, Founder of iSchool, states: “From day one we at iSchool believe in the potential of our nation’s young minds, that is why we are working day and night carrying a mission to empower today’s generation so that they become tomorrow’s technology leaders.”

Hanae Bezad Founder / President of Douar Tech, an inclusive tech hub and platform that contributes raising the resilience of vulnerable youth, especially rural women in Morocco and other countries in Africa, shares that her hope is for parents to understand the potential of technology to empower their children.

“A lot of kids have to walk many kilometres just to go to school. I’ve also been in areas where I’ve had discussions with parents who have decided to take their daughters out of school because they are now hitting puberty and they don’t want them to risk getting pregnant or to have their period at school as there’s no infrastructure for them.

Preventing their children from attending school is basically killing any chance for them to thrive in the 21st century. Technology has to solve this and empower people with knowledge to become the best version of themselves.”

Douar Tech is the Northern Africa Regional Winner of GSA Africa’s ESG Tech category and provides vulnerable youth with innovative entrepreneurship and web development skills.

George Akilimali, CEO and Founder of Tanzanian digital learning content development agency Smartcore, one of the GSA Africa country winners, shares that in Sub Saharan Africa there are more than 65 million students who are out of school.

“That number is terrifying. Additionally, for those who are lucky enough to be in school, the quality of education is unfortunately low. That is why we have the challenge of unemployment; people lack skills because of the quality of education itself. These are the biggest problems in education in Africa today.”

Another GSA Africa country winner, Ibrahim Oredola, Founder of SKillNG, a skill acquisition accelerator startup based in Nigeria, adds that while students do learn some skills, they aren’t equipped with the right skills that are demanded globally.

“Unemployment is one of the greatest problems in Africa, especially in Nigeria, where we have over 80% of the workforce either unemployed or underemployed because there is a skill mismatch and skill gap. In fact, recent research has found that 90% of job applicants are not qualified for the jobs they apply for. With tech being the backbone of every single industry nowadays, we need people to be tech-empowered.”

Looking to the future, Mustafa Abd Ellatif, Co-Founder and CEO of EYouth, the Egyptian country winner, believes that education will be completely online – especially universities. “Not only will it be cheaper, but this will also enable students to attend any university in the world to get the learning they desire.”

Griffiths concludes by saying:” To have a chance of impacting SDG Goal 4 – providing access to quality education on the continent, we need to first find the solutions that are solving educational challenges on the ground. Through the GSA Africa 2021 competition, Edtech constituted 19% of the 7500+ nominations.

Our aim is to give visibility to these solutions and connect them to the right networks to help ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

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