Presence and effect of COVID-19 on education

The COVID-19 worldwide pandemic is one of the most unanticipated events that this generation has ever experienced. It is one that we thought belongs in history books and not in the world around us. The effects of the pandemic have resulted in countries initiating state of emergencies and nationwide lockdowns, our country is no different. This has resulted in millions of students being unable to continue their formal education and thus attempts must be made to continue teaching and learning online.

How can this be achieved? There is a need for capable technologies such as virtual learning, live video streaming and aggregation sites to integrate all classwork. Examples of such technologies and software that are at the forefront of ensuring online education during this pandemic are: Zoom (for live video streaming), Microsoft Teams (for video and classwork organization) and respective websites for the educational institution to allow students to submit work.

Living in South Africa, access to online services is always an issue due to data costs and accessibility. This country has one of the data costs in the world, ranked 143 on the world in 2019[1]. This will create huge problems for students to access online educational services.

Using online educational services requires expensive technologies and this results in extreme accessibility issues. The digital divide is prominent in this country and this wound will be further exposed in these circumstances. Many students do not have access to essential devices to allow them to access these online resources. Is there a moral responsibility of people who can afford them to aid the affected people? Or is it an issue for the government and respective institution to address?

Overall, the current crisis due to the pandemic is one that no person could prepare for, nonetheless, as a South African one can be immensely proud of how our President, officials and educational institutions are currently dealing with this situation.

References

[1] Ispreview.co.uk. 2019. UK Ranked 136Th Out Of 230 Countries For Its High Mobile Data Price - Ispreview UK. [online] Available at: <https://www.ispreview.co.uk/index.php/2019/03/uk-ranked-136th-out-of-230-countries-for-its-high-mobile-data-price.html>.