

Need to improve student experience, learning outcomes is driving digital transformation - survey

A survey conducted by global learning innovation company, D2L, has revealed an increase in digital transformation across South Africa's higher education sector. The survey of more than 450 higher education professionals in SA found that 55% of respondents are motivated by the need to enhance the student experience, 51% are driven by the need to improve course quality and 43% are motivated by the need to increase student enrolments. Compared to respondents from the rest of the world, those from South Africa report the greatest positive change in attitude towards education technology due to the pandemic.



Stewart Watts, Vice President, EMEA, D2L

The study further highlights the need for higher education institutions to put the student learning experience at the centre of its digital transformation agenda. Here, 53% of the respondents reported that improving student engagement is the key objective for their transformation projects, while another 53% indicate improving learning outcomes, and 48% indicate improving student retention and completion.

Despite the positive shift, the study reveals that South Africa is behind Europe in terms of the digital transformation in education. Only 7% of courses are offered fully online, versus 13% globally. Barriers faced while implementing digital transformation strategies in the country include internet connectivity, access to suitable devices and the academic digital skills gap.

Increasingly digital

Before the pandemic, the majority of institutions had less than half of their learning offering available online despite nearly 9 out of 10 universities having started implementing their digital strategy sometime before 2020. The crisis accelerated efforts to implement digital strategies in South Africa and as a result, there now is an increased number of courses available online for students, growing to 59%.

“Change is starting to happen and it will probably be like a domino effect. The pandemic has forced a long-term shift in the way we think about EdTech and digital transformation, and it’s a good sign that higher education institutions are putting the student experience and learning outcomes at the centre of their strategies,” said Stewart Watts, vice president, EMEA, D2L. “More than 90% of respondents in South Africa say that institutions need to digitally transform to enable future growth, and improving digital skills within the academic community is also a top priority.”

The next steps for digital transformation

Overall, respondents in South Africa have seen an increase in the level of digital skills within academic and learner communities, which, at 59%, is higher than that reported in the UK (46%) and Benelux (39%). Similarly, a significantly higher proportion of respondents in South Africa (58%) report the introduction of new learning technologies to improve the digital learning experience, compared with their colleagues in other EMEA countries which is 48% in the UK and 41% in Benelux.

“The next few years are likely to herald significant changes across the higher education sector and the push to improve digital skills is welcome,” concludes Watts. “With many institutions fully committed to investing in infrastructure and staff training as a priority, we will likely see a net positive for the education sector, as new pedagogical methods are enabled that can greatly benefit universities, staff and, most importantly, the students. For South Africa specifically, digital transformation will lead to improved skills and capabilities that will be indispensable as students and staff innovate with new technologies.”

For further insight into the state of digital transformation across higher education in South Africa, visit:

<https://www.d2l.com/en-eu/resources/assets/embracing-digital-transformation-in-education/>

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>