

# Policy and National Priority Contexts of E-Learning in Contemporary African Universities: Pitfalls and Opportunities

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## **Abstract**

A critical institutional analysis indicates that the disruptions of the coronavirus disease (covid-19) pandemic and the consequent lockdown measures imposed across the world stimulated shifts in the delivery of learning in both traditional-based and open and distance learning (ODL) university institutions. Based on the objective to assess the sequence, nature, and implications of the national and institutional responses to the ‘new normal, the paper found that African universities were slower in responding to the changes occasioned by the covid-19 pandemic; national policy frameworks on e-learning were non-existent or slow paced; e-learning was not a national priority for some of the countries; universities with dual mandates mainstreamed e-learning approaches faster; pre-existing e-learning universities faced competitors as newer universities took off with strong ODL orientations, while others expanded on their mandates. The significance of the aforesaid is that a combination of global, national, and industry factors as well as institution-based e-learning ecosystem policies affected the pace of the transition to e-learning systems. These factors manifested in and from the slow-paced policy shifts, funding, and other institution-based pitfalls typically the learners’ phobia of computers, unsustainability of internet services, poor electricity, and resistant employee attitudes. Yet, open and distance learning premised on e-learning resources remain the most viable change option to the constrained access to university education in traditional face-to-face African university institutions across Anglophone, Francophone, and regional differences.

**Keywords:** Change, ecosystem, learning, open and distance, transition