

Case study
University Of Johannesburg

Digital Connected Education

Ready?

Continued Learning through
Connectivity at the University of
Johannesburg Empowers Youth





The COVID19 pandemic has undoubtedly disrupted all sectors of society this year, necessitating acceleration of the adoption of digital technology to navigate a world in crisis mode. None more so than at educational institutions, as schools and universities were forced to close their campuses and the future of the South African youth depended on studying remotely during lockdown.

The University of Johannesburg (UJ) was one of these institutions where remote learning became an urgent necessity in order for students to complete the 2020 academic year. However, for many students and educators, remote learning is a challenge as they did not have the means to secure stable connectivity or in some cases, did not have access to digital tools. Affordable data, increased access to online resources, and training in digital literacy are necessary for universities to provide education seamlessly.

“**Vodacom meets the need for virtual education solutions to help students stay on track and successfully complete the 2020 academic year. Vodacom Business partnered with UJ to keep students connected to higher learning resources remotely.**”

The Connected Digital Education Platform, developed by Vodacom Business and Microsoft South Africa, was launched in June this year, to provide access to affordable data bundles, educational apps and online resources to students and educators. Using Vodacom Business’ Edu Data Bundle and Microsoft Office 365 Education, a cloud-based service, the platform enables educators to deliver classes remotely to learners who can participate through chat or voice using a SIM card where access to Microsoft apps such as Teams is provided at no cost to the student.

Subsidised data bundles for education ensures increased participation in these virtual platforms for continued learning. During the pandemic, Vodacom Business introduced subsidised data bundle subscriptions to university students to continue with their studies remotely throughout the lockdown period. At the University of Johannesburg, all students on the Vodacom network were provisioned with a subsidised 30-day 10GB anytime data bundle with a 20GB Night Owl allocation for the month of May. The bundle, normally costing R469, was reduced to R99 and was paid for by the university. Whilst this is a significant reduction in bundle

pricing, the institutions can cross subsidise this through saving on everyday campus costs, like water, electricity, and printing costs.

“Universities experienced huge challenges during the pandemic in ensuring that their students were not adversely affected by disruptions to the academic year. Keeping students learning remotely through online resources became paramount. As Vodacom Business, we are delighted that through our partnership with UJ, we were able to support students and give them the digital tools to remain focused on their studies, and goals for the future,” says Rudi Matjokana, Managing Executive for Public Enterprises at Vodacom Business.

Additional benefits to Connected Education includes platforms that educators can use like the planning software to prepare lessons and content ahead of time and automate admin-intensive tasks, so that they can spend more real time with their students and focus on their development. Vodacom also provides training in digital literacy, and enabling learners, educators and system administrators alike so that they can best utilize and own day to day running of the solution

“**Investment in digital education is an investment in the future of South Africa**”

While these digital solutions addressed an immediate, short-term need for continued online learning at universities during the COVID-19 lockdown, empowering students is the longer-term goal. Equipped with digital skills, broadened knowledge, and a more innovative mind-set gained through increased connectivity and exposure to online education, students are able to adapt and contribute readily to a technologically advanced future. According to a World Economic Forum report, 88% of South African companies will be looking to hire staff with skills in new technologies within the next two years.

“Enabling students and educators to be connected to virtual learning solutions like those offered to universities by Vodacom Business has much bigger implications than simply meeting the demand for remote learning as a result of the pandemic. We believe that improving connectivity in education plays a key role in fast-tracking our country into the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Our initiatives to support continued learning through digital transformation means supporting the growth and prosperity of South Africa,” concluded Matjokana.

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