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Unlocking the Potential of Technology for Learning: The EdTech Landscape in Rwanda

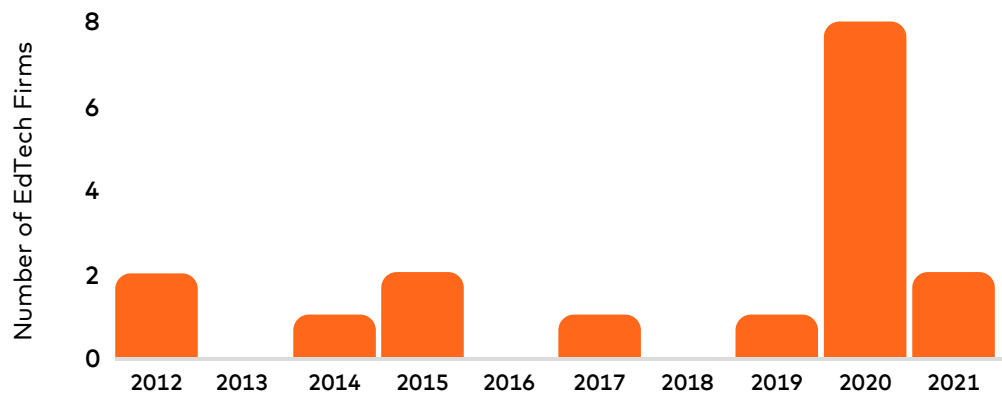


Summary of Findings

1) There is ongoing momentum to create a strong and inclusive EdTech industry in Rwanda, with buy-in at all levels

EdTech in Rwanda is at an early but promising stage, in line with global trends. The COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for EdTech in Rwanda and showed that EdTech can play a critical role in supporting and facilitating education at scale. Now is the time to build on this momentum to create a strong, inclusive EdTech industry in Rwanda.

Most EdTech Firms Interviewed Started Business in 2020

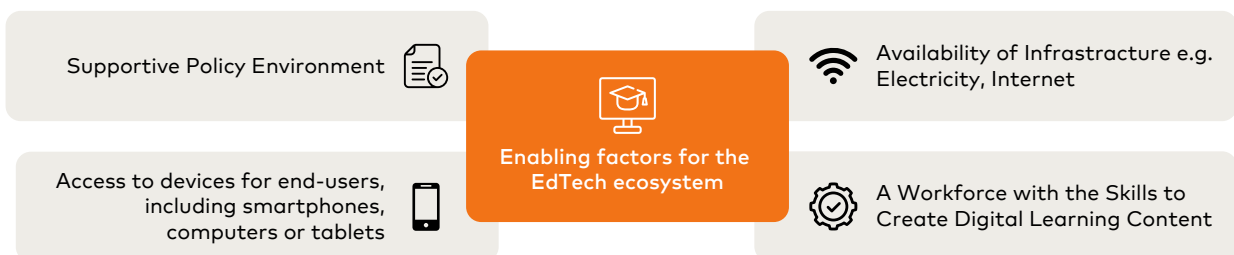


"We need to shift away from tech for survival ... [to] ensuring that technology becomes an integral part of the educational life." – Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education

2) EdTech is a complex ecosystem

The EdTech sector in Rwanda involves multiple stakeholders including government, firms, NGOs and donors. These stakeholders work on infrastructure, devices, content and delivery. EdTech solutions are implemented at all stages of the education system. Potential EdTech users are also diverse, including learners, teachers, head teachers/school management committees, education professionals managing school data, and parents.

The EdTech ecosystem relies on several interlinked enabling factors.



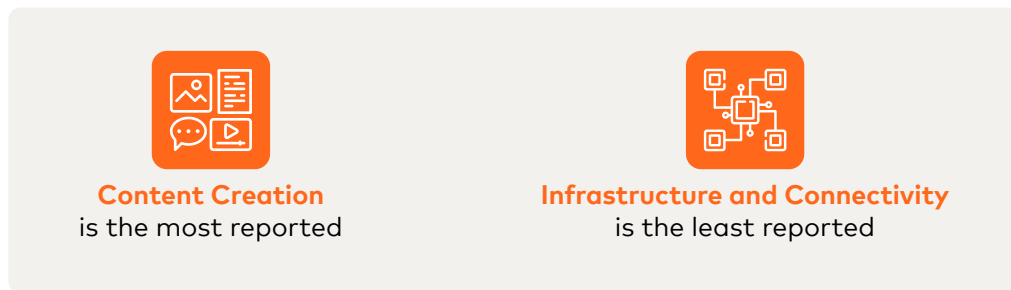
"High-performing digital infrastructure is needed to achieve the ultimate goal of EdTech to improve teaching quality and learning outcomes." – Honorable Claudette Irere, Minister of State for ICT and TVET, MINEDUC

In addition to the above enabling factors, there must be resources to fund EdTech. Because EdTech can deliver education as a public service, these will need to come from the public sector and from development partners. However, where EdTech users have sufficient purchasing power and willingness to pay for EdTech solutions, there can also be a role for private sector investment.

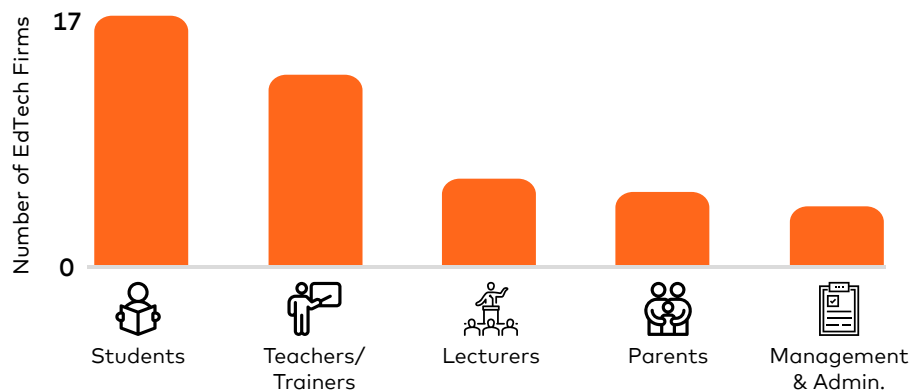
Instructors and learners need digital skills to benefit from these solutions. EdTech solutions need to be compatible with the national curriculum, where they are used in the formal education system.

This complex ecosystem needs to be well coordinated to function at its best. Policy and decision-making frameworks should minimize the risk of poor coordination by considering all dimensions of the EdTech ecosystem.

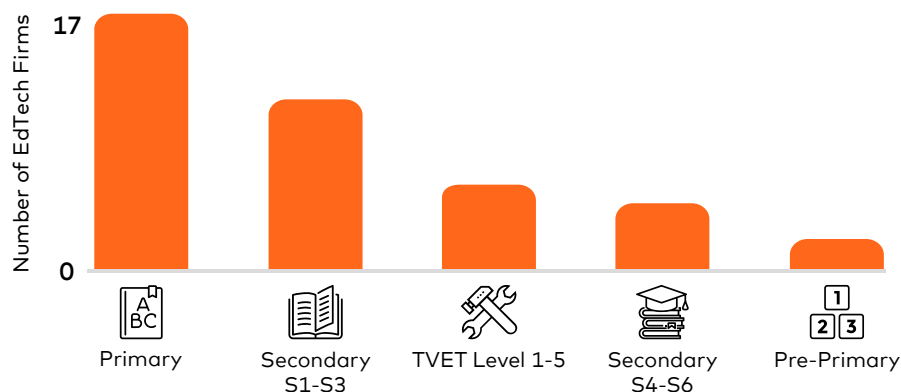
Most and Least Reported Types of Work Done by EdTech Firms in Rwanda



EdTech Firms Surveyed Offered Solutions that Target the Following End-Users...



...and the Following Education Levels*



**The above data is based on responses from 31 Rwandan EdTech firms. A firm may target more than one end-user or education level.*

3) EdTech firms want to be consulted on EdTech policy

There is appetite from the private sector to be consulted on the Government of Rwanda's forthcoming EdTech policy, especially from local firms which are providers of EdTech services.

Given the complexity of the EdTech ecosystem, the new EdTech policy would benefit from input from all players in the sector, perhaps through consultation meetings with government, so that the policy reflects the complexity of the EdTech ecosystem.

EdTech stakeholders are also interested in being consulted on other policy changes that affect the EdTech ecosystem, such as the new public procurement for innovation law and the new data security regulation, which they say is costly for local firms to comply with.

4) A framework is needed to facilitate collaboration between government and EdTech stakeholders, and within the Edtech ecosystem

Beyond the development of the EdTech policy, there is a need for a framework to foster communication, consultation, coordination, collaboration and information sharing between government and EdTech stakeholders including the private sector. The complexity of the Rwandan EdTech ecosystem makes the need for efficient communication essential.

This framework would provide channels through which firms and NGOs can raise issues with government and navigate approval and procurement processes. This could include office hours in government; publicly tracking the use of EdTech in the country; and developing a directory of government validated EdTech solutions from which schools can choose.

"You have to go many steps above [a relevant] person. It's hard to get that kind of introduction. You are always talking to the wrong person." – Interview respondent from an EdTech firm

EdTech firms and NGOs should also be supported to collaborate with each other, to share resources and experience, to the benefit of the industry and education system as a whole.

This could include talent transfer programs to transfer knowledge between large international companies and Rwandan EdTech startups; establishing an online platform for knowledge sharing about EdTech in Rwanda; holding an annual EdTech exhibition; and continuing the EdTech Monday series.

5) Clarity is needed on approval processes, standards and procurement rules around using EdTech in the education system

There is a need to streamline government approval processes to make them predictable and efficient for EdTech firms. This would help them to more efficiently obtain approvals for pilots or rollouts in schools or universities.

EdTech stakeholders called for standards on EdTech products which are certified for use in schools. Clear criteria and processes for certification and procurement would help EdTech companies know what they need to do to be endorsed by the public sector and thus to scale up their products in the education system.

"In the short run [EdTech] needs to be adopted or supported by government and development partners." – Interview respondent from an EdTech firm

EdTech stakeholders would like to be consulted on procurement rules and processes for the private sector. The final standards should act as quality control for EdTech solutions deployed in educational institutions, in a way that supports local EdTech firms but does not stifle innovation.

6) EdTech policy and solutions should proactively address the diversity of users and their needs: there is no 'one-size-fits-all'

Most EdTech stakeholders in Rwanda believe that EdTech can be a force for inclusion. For example, EdTech can reach children with quality digital content cheaply at scale, can deliver tailored content and education methods to students with different needs, and can support teachers across the country with lesson plans and training.

However, there is a digital divide in access to infrastructure, devices and digital literacy. The result is that digital education content would benefit some but would leave behind those who already face additional barriers to their education - especially girls, students and teachers with disabilities, students from low-income families, and those in rural areas.

"There are not yet the skills to serve those with less visible or obvious disabilities."
– Interview respondent from an NGO

Policy and funding to shift to digital education in Rwanda should proactively address the digital divide by investing in digital infrastructure, devices, and digital literacy and skills in a way that is demographically and geographically equitable, consultative and tailored to the needs of all possible EdTech users.

This summary is based on the report "Unlocking the potential of technology for learning: the EdTech landscape in Rwanda" prepared by Laterite for the Mastercard Foundation Centre for Innovative Teaching and Learning in ICT. The full report is [available online](#).