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Keynote 5: Integrated Approach to Enabling Digital Transformation of the Education Sector

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The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the need for secure and reliable cyberinfrastructure to support research and education. The reality however is that while selected players in the education sector have made commendable progress in terms of building, maintaining and upgrading such kind of infrastructure, many critical players are still struggling to access and build cyberinfrastructure that can position them as value adding contributors to digital transformation. National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) within the UbuntuNet Alliance region are not spared from this disadvantage. To address this gap, UbuntuNet Alliance, the Regional Research and Education Network of Southern and Eastern Africa has been undertaking various initiatives with various partners including sister RRENs, development partners and NREN members to create an enabling environment for the building and deployment of reliable cyberinfrastructure that can ably support digital transformation. With this integrated approach, the Alliance has managed to provide a platform under which NRENs are building own cyberinfrastructure like cloud infrastructure, learning management systems and web conferencing platforms. The Alliance is also deploying, within its region, tools and services critical for digital transformation. These include eduroam, eduID and engineer capacity-building services. In addition, the Alliance is encouraging strategic partnerships between NREN members and telecom companies. Through such partnerships, NREN members are able to broker zero rating deals, data bundle price reductions for university students and staff and in some cases get into cost-effective sharing of existing infrastructure with the telecom companies.

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