

Making teacher education relevant for 21st century Africa



'Innovate Africa' video summary

This film describes an innovative IT project in Kenya which gives children access to learning on tablets. It describes the project and shows children working in a normal Kenyan classroom on tablet computers.

The project based in Kenya's I-Hut where young thinkers are given resources to enable them to come up with innovative new ideas. Two young women met and collaborated here on what has become Kenya's most successful e-learning tool, ELIMU, which means 'Education' in Swahili. ELIMU is an integrated learning system designed specifically for Kenyan school students. Students log in via a dashboard page on which are links to the six main subjects of the school curriculum. The ELIMU tool takes content from text books used across these curriculum areas, in particular elements that are likely to come up in exams, and brings it to life using animations, videos, pictures and music.

The resources are delivered on low cost, accessible tablets which can also link students to the internet. Pedagogical experts, teachers by profession, sit on the developers' team and their knowledge, together with input from text book publishers, informs the content on the tablet. Historically, Kenyan children have not been encouraged to question teachers so the interactivity of the ELIMU materials is a disruptive technology which promotes active participation of the students. The tablets are also made available in libraries where children are encouraged to explore the technology independently.

The developers explain how children are attending school but not learning and understanding, and they have carried out some studies that show that learners who have actively engaged with the materials are more able to understand the concepts they have been taught than those who have only had access to textbooks. New content is uploaded every two weeks for teachers and learners to use.

Having launched the 'One Laptop Per Child' programme in Kenya, the government has made Digital Literacy mandatory for all teachers who need therefore to know how to use such technology. A small school in the Kalangari District was chosen as a pilot. This was a struggling school, but a new and very supportive head teacher has introduced this new approach using technology to break through the norm of classroom teaching. Since introducing ELIMU, the school exam results have improved together with the children's social and environmental consciousness. Science results in particular have gone from an average of between 50–60, up to an average of 70–80 and they have a target of 90. This has been very motivating for the learners. The film shows children in a classroom, working on the tablets in pairs, using headphones.

In an interview the head teacher acknowledges the challenges of introducing the tablets to learners who may not even be familiar with a basic mobile phone. However, he emphasises that they really enjoy accessing the resources and the material on the tablet makes the school curriculum more understandable for many children.

This document has been produced as part of the Open University's TESSA project and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike License
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

<http://www.tessafrica.net/>

