

## **Digital Literacy Programme in Kenya; Developing IT Skills in Children to align them to the Digital World and Changing Nature of Work-Briefing Note**, by Kennedy Ogolla

### **Background**

Digital Literacy Programme (DLP) that has currently earned a brand name “DigiSchool” was borne out of the Government’s vision to equip pupils with relevant skills needed in today’s digital world. Its objectives were to: entrench ICT in teaching and learning process, equip public primary schools with appropriate ICT infrastructure to support teaching and learning, to develop capacity of teachers, education managers and other stakeholders with necessary ICT skills, enable development and accreditation of appropriate digital content to enhance acquisition of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, promote universal access to ICT tools in primary schools and lastly, to integrate sustainable and affordable digital programme in Kenyan education system. The programme was designed to introduce public primary school children to the use of digital technology and communication in learning. Currently, the programme is almost 100% complete with over 20,000 out of 23,951 public primary schools having been issued with the devices.

### **How DLP works**

The programme has five key components: First, digital devices are provided for both learners and teachers. The devices include the teacher digital device, learners’ digital device, projector, DLP content servers (DCS), digital wireless router, power supply for grid or solar power, device storage, and charging and special needs specific devices. Second, capacity development for teacher and implementers. The programme enhances the ICT skills among teachers and communities through the teacher capacity building element of the programme. Third, is the provision of broadband connectivity devices including storage and servers, power connection, classrooms and desks that pupils use when learning. Fourth, the provision of content for digital learning. The programme has a framework for identification of approved educational content materials under the leadership of Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development which are then digitized in form of text, audio, videos, graphics, animations, images etc.

### **How DLP responds to the challenges posed by the changing nature of work**

Digital literacy skills have become key fabric in our survival in the now competitive labor market. This programme imparts digital skills in children who then internalize and grow up

prepared to face the world. And as every new technology require new skills, the programme's introduction in Kenya faced a big challenge initially as most of the teachers in our primary schools had either no ICT training, were computer illiterate or both. However, as new technologies are introduced in workplaces, the labor force should be encouraged to adapt to the changes. And it is in this spirit that the Kenyan government trained over 91,000 primary school teachers on digital learning. For posterity, ICT and Computer Use training was integrated into the teachers training curriculum at the college level.

### **Impact of DLP in Kenya**

Teachers are already reporting improvement in learning behaviors of their pupils. According to most teachers, pupils have become more alert and learning more practical and fun. Also, cases of absenteeism have reduced and increased number of pupils admitted to public schools. The programme has enhanced the ICT skills among teachers through the teacher capacity building element component. Additionally, over 6,000kms of fiber have been laid out countrywide that ensures there is internet connectivity in all the schools to enable the digital learning. Moreover, communities around the schools have benefited from electricity connection as more schools are connected to the power grid (over 95% of primary schools have been connected). The programme has provided a range of jobs including ICT support centers in the counties, and business opportunities in digital education content development and e-waste management and disposal. Lastly, the programme has raised Kenya's global profile as a leader and hub in ICT.

### **How DLP can be implemented by policymakers in other countries**

While each country's scenario may be different, here are a few lessons from the Kenyan experience for those hoping to borrow a leaf. One, it is important to conduct a proper need assessment in all the targeted primary schools to ensure the schools have the basic stationeries before commencing the project. Two, it is pertinent that all the target schools be connected to power grid before the devices are issued. Third, quality gargets that can last for a long time should be procured and distributed to the schools. The best way to go about it is to first conduct a pilot study on a few selected schools before rolling out the project to all public schools. Fourth, the government identifies teachers in all the targeted primary schools who are then trained in digital learning. The government should work with other stakeholders in developing contents and education materials that are then digitized and uploaded into the digital platform.