Support digital learning and help build SA's digital future

Education in the online space was brought into sharp focus during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the barriers in education in South Africa. A 2020 report released by Statistics South Africa showed the scale of the challenge in that only 11.7% of schools offered remote learning options, nationally.

Photo by Katerina Holmes via www.pexels.com

Most households did not have digital assets such as laptops and tablets to allow learners to learn remotely using digital tools – in 2020 among all households with children aged 5–24, computer ownership was at 24.7% and just 7% of households with children in that age bracket had access to the internet at home.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) also reports that sub-Saharan Africa has the world's most expensive mobile data prices. According to the report, South Africans pay up to R85 per gigabyte (GB) of data – the equivalent of nearly four hours' work at minimum wage. By comparison, 1GB of data costs around R24.58 in North Africa and R39 in Western Europe.

Covid-19 has driven digital transformation in higher education
Dr Nicos Nicolaou 13 Feb 2023

With those statistics in mind, there are plenty of organisations working to stop the digital divide – widening even further. Not all children are learning online, but there's been a shift that needs to be addressed. There's legislative work to be done in helping reduce the cost of data and ongoing fundraising to improve access to computers and tablets to enable learners to become digitally literate.

"Where we're left short, then, is in terms of both opportunity and skills – which risks widening the local and international digital divide even further," says MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet general manager, Pieter Twine.

In addressing the skills shortage, there are programmes that aim to upskill teachers who deliver Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmess to a generation of children growing up in a world of 4IR. Programmes such as CotlandsIGNITE aims to provide skills in a sector which will need 350,000 ECD facilitators, practitioners and assistants to provide sufficient access for children by 2030.

 Cotlands celebrates female entrepreneurs in early childhood development
Cotlands 16 Sep 2022

SchoolNet South Africa's purpose is to act as a catalyst and an enabler of positive change for the education system. Since traditional teaching methodology has not evolved to keep in line with technological development SchoolNet is going beyond infrastructure development to establishing teacher development programs to develop educators and learners who are keen to explore new ideas and think innovatively.

"These two MySchool beneficiaries are championing a third cause – access to vital content," says Twine. "It's clear that we need to challenge digital literacy on three fronts – content, connectivity and computers'.

Computer Aid International, a not-for-profit organisation active in the field of Information and Communication Technologies for Development, has provided 10,942 computers to South Africa. In addition to projects which focus on providing computers to areas where they will have the biggest impact, Computer Aid International also run Solar Learning Lab projects in areas where infrastructure is an issue. Solar Learning Labs are shipping containers converted into solar-powered internet classrooms.

"These are just some of the organisations that MySchool card holders can help, every time they swipe their card at a partner store. That partner donates a percentage of the customer's spend to their chosen beneficiary – at no cost to the customer. By supporting initiatives like these and plenty of others doing phenomenal work out there in helping people in South Africa – young and old – to learn about, upskill for and access digital technology, each of us can help build a more robust, technology-forward future for our country," says Twine.

For more, visit: https://www.bizcommunity.com