

Nokia, Pearson, Airtel train public school teachers in Lagos

Nokia, the Pearson Foundation and Airtel Nigeria have completed the training of teachers in public schools in Lagos on the use of mobile technology to deliver rich media content to students in their classrooms.



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A total of 62 teachers from 32 schools were trained under the Airtel, Nokia, and Pearson Foundation technology-driven education initiative, BridgeIT, in collaboration with the Lagos state government through the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB).

The BridgeIT programme

BridgeIT combines mobile technology, the use of mobile phones and teachers to deliver and share high quality educational content in public schools where IT infrastructure may be limited. The schools are part of a pre-pilot program and the number is expected to grow to more grade levels and subject areas over the next two years.

Teachers will receive digital educational programming - videos, pictures, text, and audio files - over mobile network already in use in their community, and are empowered to share these materials with students in ways that improve student learning.

The commencement of the pilot BridgeIT programme is a follow up to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Nokia, Pearson, Airtel and Longman with the Lagos State Government early in May this year.

How the programme works

While Nokia will provide the technology, a mobile application known as Nokia Education Delivery (NED), Pearson Foundation, the learning company, will provide the educational content. Airtel Nigeria has the duty to provide the network coverage that will enable teachers to download the videos to their phones, which are used as instructional materials.

After viewing educational content, students participate in interactive lessons facilitated by teachers who have benefited from professional development workshops that promote collaboration and the use of mobile technology in the classroom. The implementation of the programme begins this academic session in schools drawn mostly from suburban parts of Lagos.

According to a statement from the partners to the BridgeIT, the programme follows a simple technique: 'videos are stored on a remote server and organised according to subject and grade. By connecting the mobile phone to a TV or a projector, the teacher can play the videos to a class to illustrate any relevant topic in the school curriculum.'

Besides other benefits, BridgeIT also offers teachers in public schools an opportunity to sharpen their skills and upgrade themselves through well structured professional development efforts.

While the first phase of the implementation of BridgeIT begins this month of September in 32 schools, the consortium have given the assurance that the programme will eventually be extended to many other hundreds of schools in the country in the next three years.

Committed to development

Partners to the programme have individually and collectively reaffirmed their commitment to the development of the Nigerian child through the BridgeIT programme, stating that the initial focus of the programme would be the critical subjects of Mathematics, English and Science.

CEO of Airtel Nigeria, Rajan Swaroop, expressed his company's delight that the programme is eventually taking off and said the BridgeIT has the potential to transform lives of school children, the leaders of tomorrow.

He explained that the BridgeIT program was in line with Airtel's Corporate Social Responsibility trust, the Adopt-A-School programme, which underscores the company's commitment to providing the much-needed support for the improvement of the educational sector in the country.

"This effort allows students in Nigeria to benefit from the BridgeIT model and extends the Pearson Foundation's commitment to student achievement and teacher ability across the globe," explained Pearson Foundation president and CEO Mark Nieker.

Social benefits

General manager of Nokia West Africa, James Rutherford said Nokia is actively involved in communities around the world to create tangible social benefits. According to him, Nokia is committed to enhancing the quality of life around the world by using mobile technology to stimulate social and economic development.

In his words, "realising that government cannot shoulder the educational challenges of a developing country like Nigeria alone, Nokia feels a sense of responsibility to contribute its quota in helping to improve the delivery of public educational services by improving both the performance of students and the quality of teaching in our public schools".

Rutherford further added that workshops have been conducted to train teachers in using the software to optimize their lesson plans using video content. He thanked Airtel for making it possible for the videos to be downloaded over its mobile network.

The BridgeIT model has been used in the Philippines, Tanzania, Chile, Colombia, and India. Each implementation of the program has been characterized by using the latest educational technologies, the empowerment of teachers to fully utilise mobile technology in the classroom, and the following of a tailored and focused program for a sustainable, scalable, and replicable implementation in partnership with local education ministries and agencies.

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