uKUFUNDa

ABOUT UKUFUNDA

WHAT EXACTLY IS UKUFUNDA?

Ukufunda is the name of the virtual school that was developed by Mxit Reach, UNICEF and the Department of Basic Education (DBE). It's an innovation in the South African education system that will address inequalities in the school system, raise education standards and put the power of education in the hands of every learner, teacher and parent.

Ukufunda was modelled on schools that are regarded as centres of excellence. At these institutions, educators and learners alike had access to good quality learning aids and content, psychosocial support in the form of counsellors and extra-mural activities such as debating clubs. These key components are replicated in Ukufunda - learners, educators and parents have access to learning resources and content, counselling and safety services, a central communication and notification hub and many other value-added services and programmes.

WHAT MAKES UKUFUNDA UNIQUE?

While there are other virtual schools and mobile-enabled educational technology, these are either only available via the web or if though a mobile app, usually restricted to smart devices. In South Africa, as in many countries, access to the web and ownership of a smart device is beyond the reach of those who need it the most.

Ukufunda is unique because it breaks down those barriers and allows accessibility and support across 8 000 mobile devices, and reaches areas where only 2G connectivity is available.

Ukufunda enables remote learning and teaching; the delivery of the CAPS curriculum; fosters continuing teacher professional development and professional learning communities in ways that can reach the most remote learners and teachers in South Africa. This aligns Ukufunda very strongly to the objectives of the National Development Plan of South Africa.

Many past and current mobile phone-based education programmes in South Africa are solely focused on supporting learners directly; Ukufunda will also speak to the needs of government, schools, teachers and parents to improve education.

UKUFUNDA WILL BE ROLLED OUT IN 3 PHASES:

1. Teachers are the first stakeholder group and the DBE will utilise and test tools like the virtual calendar, by populating it with key dates and disseminating important notices. The DBE will also shortly roll out a diagnostic tool for all teachers to help improve their content knowledge.

2. The second phase of deployment will focus on learners and will be complemented by a comprehensive online safety programme. Mxit Reach is currently engaging with content partners to bolster revision materials for Grade 12s in the lead-up to the Matric exams this year. Ukufunda already has learners from over 3000 schools across the country enrolled on the platform.

3. The final phase, planned for mid 2015, is the roll out of Ukufunda to parents.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF USING UKUFUNDA?

- **Continuous learning**: Because the virtual school is mobile, it means that learning is extended beyond the classroom and can take place anywhere and at any time. It's essentially a tutor, library, counsellor and mentor in your pocket, available 24/7, at virtually no cost to the end user.

- **Improved communication between education stakeholder groups**: Tools such as the virtual calendar and discussion groups improve communication between all education stakeholders. For instance, the calendar allows the national DBE structures to instantaneously alert and notify its various stakeholder groups, irrespective of their handset type and at almost no cost to the DBE. This works in the same way at a school-level, allowing a principal to send messages to parents, teachers or learners.

  Furthermore, Ukufunda will facilitate the growth of professional learning communities among teachers, Teacher Centre Managers, the Department of Basic Education, Provincial Education Departments and District officials.

- **Access to learning resources**: Books, assessment tools, question papers and other learning aids that are usually only available at a cost, are freely available on Ukufunda. Ukufunda will boast an ever-expanding library of educational resources.

- **Accessibility**: Ukufunda is handset agnostic and can be accessed on more than 8 000 devices - this ranges from low-end feature phones to smart devices including tablets. While smartphone adoption use is growing rapidly in South Africa, the majority (1 in 5) of South Africans still make use of a feature phone.

- **Affordability**: Mxit is extremely data-light and the cost to the end-user is very low. A recent trial by Mxit Reach suggested that if Ukufunda is accessed for an entire week inclusive of downloading a book, the data costs would range between R5 to R8, dependent on mobile handset, network stability and network provider rates. Fortunately, one mobile network service provider in South Africa has already indicated that they are considering zero-rating Ukufunda for users.

WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES (IF ANY) FOR LEARNERS AND TEACHERS?

Possible barriers to uptake and mobile learning could include:

- **Access to mobile devices:** Although mobile penetration in South Africa is extremely high, there may be instances where a learner or teacher doesn't own a mobile phone. But, it's more than likely they will have access to one, from which they can access Ukufunda. Mxit Reach and its partners are investigating ways in which handset manufacturers, network providers, corporates and the broader public can participate by donating older and surplus handsets.

- **Cyber bullying**: A potential but limited threat. Ukufunda has stringent checks and balances in place to curb this behaviour and anyone found to be infringing the privacy and/or rights of another individual on the platform will be kicked off the platform. Mxit Reach has a zero tolerance policy regarding the abuse and misuse of Ukufunda and user engagement will be monitored very closely. Mxit's Family Safety Centre app has already been made available in Ukufunda - this links users to tips and advice regarding safe online use and steps to take to report untoward/inappropriate behaviour. In addition, all parties will roll out awareness and education campaigns in schools and on the platform.

WHAT PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES HAVE UKUFUNDA TAKEN TO ENSURE SECURE USE FOR LEARNERS AND TEACHERS?

Safety of our Ukufunda users is of utmost importance to Mxit Reach and our partners. Numerous checks and balances have been put in place to ensure educators, learners and their parents are as safe as possible. Like any system, it's not 100% guaranteed-safe, so there will be regular and intense monitoring of usage will be performed, and anything that violates the platform's terms and conditions of use will be removed. Furthermore we also

Precautionary measures include restrictions on advertising by private companies and individuals, sending out alerts on the safe use of mobile devices and developing apps that encourage cyber-safety. Tools to protect your privacy, to report and block people are also available.

USER SAFETY ON MXIT
As one of the world's first social networks, Mxit has extensive experience in developing tools to offer support, privacy and security to its users and has a multi-layered security approach.

The first layer of security is ensuring that kids and adults don't mix in the Chat Zones. Specific Chat Zones are set up for 13 – 17 year-old users, and a separate range of Chat Zones is available to users 18 years and older. This is bolstered by a set of reporting tools that enable users to report abusive or offensive comments from within chat rooms. Mxit's support team moderates these reports with sanctions against offenders ranging from temporary to permanent banning from Chat Zones or suspending their profiles completely.

Mxit recently added another layer of security that amplifies the self-moderation by the user community. The Report Abuse tool allows users who encounter offensive profile pictures, cover images or status updates to report these to Mxit's support team, who intervene to remove the offensive content.

There is a careful balance between freedom of speech, access to information and the infringing on the rights of others, and Mxit encourages the user community to self-moderate their Mxit experience. To this end, the Family Safety Centre app, built in partnership with Google SA, educates parents and children about online safety and appropriate online behaviour.

Mxit's support team handles almost 20,000 support queries every week, through a number of interfaces on the Mxit platform itself and through email, social media and telephonic support.

HOW DO TEACHERS ACCESS UKUFUNDA?

- Firstly, you will need to download Mxit, register and create a profile.
- Once your Mxit account has been created, go to Apps >> Select 'Apps' >> 'Search' & write 'ukufunda_teacher'. Once ukufunda_teacher has been added, go to Apps and select ukufunda_teacher to open it.
- On **Ukufunda_teacher** you will find the following:
    - **My Education Resources:** Links to textbooks and reference material
    - **My Safety and Wellness:** Links to counselling and emergency services
    - **My Calendar:** Notifications of tasks and events
    - **My Groups**: Virtual Communities of Practice
    - **My Classroom:** Only learner-facing educators can access this section and communicate directly with learners they teach
    - **My Contacts:** these connect you with all contacts in your institution/area e.g. a school or a district
    - **The ANA Test:** an assessment tool modelled on the paper version of the ANA tests conducted by the Department of Basic Education

ABOUT MXIT

Mxit is a South African mobile social network with millions of monthly active users. The majority of our users are located in South Africa, and other key markets include India, Nigeria and Indonesia.

Mxit is incredibly data-light, so users can spend more time chatting learning or playing. One of Mxit's core strengths is our ability to tailor features with market-specific focus, and providing original localised content targeted at emerging market youth.

VALUE PROPOSITION FOR MXIT USERS:
• Mxit is incredibly data-light, so users can spend more time chatting learning or playing. Mxit's unique compression algorithm helps control data consumption (photos, videos) to keep costs down. An average user logs on 5 times and spends 105 minutes per day on Mxit.
• Users can share their journey with all their friends, as Mxit works on more than 8 000 devices, including tablets.
• Mxit is available in 22 languages, including Hausa, Swahili, African French, Arabic and several Indian languages.

Why is Mxit data-light?
Mxit makes use of a custom client protocol that focuses on limiting the amount of data transferred to a mobile device. The protocol is also bi-directional allowing Mxit to only push data to a device when required compared to other applications that keep on polling for data.

ABOUT MXIT REACH

Mxit Reach is a registered Public Benefit Organisation established to inspire and improve lives through the development of innovative and cost-effective mobile solutions. Every month more than 1 million people access educational, health and counselling services via Mxit Reach.

Mxit Reach believes that one of their most important roles is to act as a technology conduit, linking experts such as UNICEF and their content and services with the people who need it most. At the same time, they continue to push boundaries and innovate around the potential of mobile phones to drive cost-effective and substantial positive change in our society.

NOTEWORTHY STATS:
• In 2013, over 600 000 people made use of a counselling service on Mxit.
• On average, over 500 000 people access educational apps every month.
• There are 6 e-readers available on Mxit Reach: Bookly, EverEgg, FunDza, Nal'ibali, Yoza and Springbooks. In July, FunDza fans spent 56 955 hours reading stories, articles, poems and books. On the FunDza app you will find: 153 English short stories, 37 short stories written in other South African languages, 505 articles, and 139 blog posts.
• This year, over 60 000 learners have already accessed career guidance via Brainwave.
• 84 000 users access daily activities on Groovy Adventurers, which can aid their child's development.
• In 2013, an average of 200 000 women per month used BabyInfo to receive daily pregnancy advice messages.
• More than 3 000 South African schools participated in the Ibali Lami National Writing competition in July 2014.