Children okay computer test-drive

COMPUTING

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Image: By John Churu

By John Churu, Gaborone, Botswana
Therisanyo Primary School children, who have been learning how to use computers at the ongoing Innovation Africa conference, say the practice has been an eye opener.

The school, which is situated within one of Gaborone slums called Old Naledi, has no computer teaching facilities and most of the handpicked 30 or so pupils have never been near a computer in their lives.

One learner, Kesegofetse Kesekile, who is in standard 6 at the school, said she was so impressed by the time she was doing her first computer steps. "I have learnt about computers and this is the first time that I have laid my hands on a computer. It is also the first time that I have played games with this computer. I didn't know how to shift and how to erase I have learnt all this today here."

Kesekile's sentiments and joy were shared by all of the children who took part in a project that is being undertaken Russell Pengelly from Computers 4 kids, a South African based company at Innovation Africa to demonstrate how the concept works. The children had practical lessons on how draw body parts; paint the Botswana national flag and many other activities.

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Joseph Motswakhumo, a teacher at the school who accompanied the children, said the children were excited with the-once-in-a-lifetime chance. "The kids were very excited even though they had seen these computers for the first time today. I wish the government should do something not just an exposure. My other plea is that the ministry of education should develop teachers in computer awareness. Even me as I speak I can't operate a computer so how can I impart skills to the children?"

He complained that most of the computer labs that have been built at schools throughout the country are turning out to be "white elephants" because most teachers can't teach ICT and at times there are no computers at all."

Russell Pengelly said his company has been teaching school children for 19 years. "We have trained more than 6 million students and over 18,000 teachers throughout Africa. We take the national curriculum and digitise the content to suit a particular system," he explained. Pengelly added that some of the schools have been contracted to Computers 4 Kids for more than 13 years. "Our philosophy is that technology is expensive and should be utilised more," he explained to BiztechAfrica.

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