

Computers for Schools Kenya (CFSK) Evaluation Report

Daniel J. Babikwa, Ayub Macharia and Lazarus Kivuva

Abstract

This is a report of the evaluation of the Computers for Schools Kenya (CFSK) programme. CFSK was registered in October 2002 and began operating as an indigenous nongovernmental organisation in January 2003. The programme delivered the first lot of computers in March 2003. Its main activity has been to collect, repair, refurbish and distribute donated computers to public secondary schools at a token fee to cultivate a culture of ownership among the beneficiaries. The major goal of the programme is to eliminate the high rate of computer illiteracy in the Kenyan society and to foster a computing culture among Kenyan youth. The project has been involved in the provision of technical support and computer maintenance services to partner institutions; ICT curriculum development; training and participation in the National ICT policy formulation and implementation.

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an overview of CFSK's support and involvement among partner institutions with specific emphasis on the extent to which partners are involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of programme activities. It also sought to establish how CFSK has succeeded in building relationships with partner schools and what challenges it has encountered and lessons learnt in the process of implementation.

The evaluation employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and a total of sixteen schools were sampled in the eight provinces of the country. The results of the evaluation revealed that CFSK has made key contributions to the ICT revolution in the Kenyan education system.

Over five thousand computers have for example been distributed throughout the country. This has been in addition to the training and sensitisation of more than three thousand (3000) ICT teachers, principals, representatives of Boards of Governors and PTAs about the value and practical ways of integrating computers in educational delivery. As a result, principals, teachers, BOG and PTA members have been empowered to initiate ICT project in their schools and manage them, hence clearly demarcating the roles. CFSK has set up a system for distributing and maintaining computers donated to ensure that they remain functioning as efficiently. The system involves a close tracking of the computers from the day it is donated when it finally disposed of at the end of its lifetime in an environmentally friendly way.

CFSK has played a central role in challenging government to develop an ICT policy, which is now in place although not yet implemented. The organisation fully participated in the development of the national strategy for integrating ICT in the educational delivery. CFSK has also developed a practical need oriented ICT curriculum, which it is implementing to its partner schools.

The presence of the CFSK programme has encouraged schools to set up ICT infrastructure like computer laboratories, schools have also set up policies and systems for managing computers. The evaluation established that CFSK has increased students' access to computers although the student

to computer ratio in the sampled schools was still high, often not less than three students per computer.

While it was true that schools had some teachers to teach computer studies, there was evidence that the availability of teachers was below the required numbers. The majority of ICT teachers were also not qualified teachers. This was because government neither trains, recruits nor pays ICT teachers. The burden to hire and pay is left to BOGs. The evaluation observed that without the government involving itself in the training, recruitment and paying of ICT teachers, ICT projects in schools were going to become unsustainable.

The students emerged as the major users of computers in the schools while teachers were found to be using computers dismally – either due to attitude or absence of digital content. Students had a high level of competence in using computers.

A significant amount of learning was found to have resulted from the introduction of computers in schools. Some students could for example use more than three computers programmes including essential ones like: Ms Word, excel and power point they could also calculate, use the thesaurus draw and paint. In addition students had become more confident, proud of their schools because of computers and were no longer afraid of technology. This outcome demonstrated a clear balance in the way the programme addressed the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

There was however some emerging negative aspects that were associated with the introduction of computers in the schools. Some students were for example introducing illegal foreign material like pornographic CDs and DVDs.

Internet connectivity was still a major problem in most of the schools largely due to costs. Unreliable electricity supply was also found to limit connectivity and the general use of computers especially in the more remote areas.

The relationship between CFSK and some regional education officials in particular the PDEs and DEOs was not very positive in spite of the efforts by CFSK to bring them on board through training and charging them with the responsibility to endorse schools before receiving computers. This was apparently due to poor communication between the centre, CFSK and the officers at the district and provincial level. The BOGs and PTA's on the other hand had a very good working relationship with CFSK.

Donors had a very positive opinion towards CFSK. They saw a lot of potential in the organisation and were willing to continue supporting it. And it was finally concluded that CFSK was still relevant to the Kenyan Youth and should be supported further.

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