

Networks zero-rate maths education programme for township youth

Telecommunications providers, Cell C, MTN and Rain, have added the Olico Maths Education Programme to their list of zero-rated educational resources, allowing network users to access the programme for free.



Photo by [Andrea Placquadro](#) from [Pexels](#)

The Olico Maths Education Programme features a combination of the recently revised curriculum with puzzles and problem-solving activities, competitions, games and weekly challenges to keep learners busy, connected and engaged.

Launched in 2008, the Olico Maths Education Programme has provided effective and increasingly popular after-school tutoring and training, part-funded by the Datatec Education and Technology Foundation, with the programme actively working in Alexandra, Diepsloot, Bosmont, Dunoon and Heideveld, and partners using Olico maths content working in Soweto, Ivory Park, Khayelitsha, Gugulethu and deep-rural Eastern Cape.

“...There is a real concern for the damage this lockdown is doing, especially on grade 8 and 9 learners who are only scheduled to resume school in August – that’s why remote-support through WhatsApp and zero-rated educational sites, like ours, can be a vital lifeline,” says Andrew Barret, co-founder and national coordinator of Olico.

The Covid-19 adaption is a tools- and resources-based programme accessed online, via WhatsApp and through an Android app. Teachers and learners actively engage with each other every day via these platforms. Tutors call or message the learners each morning, and then track their progress through WhatsApp or online.

The free online version of the programme features more than 28,000 interactive questions and 376 tutorial videos, worksheets for sharing, tutoring and discussion over WhatsApp, and a fun, time-based activity designed to build number fluency in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division which is suitable for all grades. Logic puzzles promote problem-solving and creative thinking, while a senior-phase mathematics summary guide featuring key mathematical concepts for grades 7, 8 and 9 is downloadable for free.

“We have about 680 learners on WhatsApp, which is about 60% of the high-school learners we would usually work with,” says Barret. “Access to smartphone devices and data are the main barriers to access for the other learners. The three telcos have really helped us address one part of the challenge. We’re hoping Vodacom and Telkom confirm their interest, and we’re in the process of trying to procure entry-level smartphone devices.”

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