

# New software to provide multilingual learning unveiled

June 12 2014, by Tom Frew

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A new learning system could soon be providing school children with easy access to multi-lingual education materials.

Called M-Thuto the system works on [mobile](#) phones and allows children to switch between English and Setswana language versions of educational materials at the press of a button, and its creator is hoping that through the help of the government it will become part of children's every day education.

M-Thuto's developer, Mmaki Jantjies - a software developer from the North West Province soon to be awarded a PhD by the University of Warwick, UK - recognised that students in grades 10-12 often struggled in Maths and Science due to the lack of Multilanguage learning materials.

Ms Jantjies argues that M-Thuto, Setswana for 'mobile education', was designed to "target [support](#) for learners from all different types of background and provide them with the best educational resources possible."

"Many children do not have access to the smart phones and computers that can provide them with an excellent educational advantage. I realised that [children](#) without access to these devices were often the ones who required the most help and so I decided that the system should support even the most basic [mobile phone](#).

"M-Thuto presents all students with learning content in English and other regional languages, including Setswana and Xhosa, and provides them with an easy, accessible way of understanding the materials they need to reach their potential."

M-Thuto was developed as part of Ms Jantjies' PhD studies, supervised by Dr Mike Joy, and was tested in a number of South African schools, with teachers and students reporting a marked improvement in results during the test period.

"I am passionate about bringing the skills and knowledge I have gained studying at the University of Warwick home and putting them to effective use in South Africa," said Ms Jantjies. "The possibilities of new technology, such as M-Thuto, provide a real opportunity for the government to invest in and support students and I believe we can make a real, positive step forward for our young people."

M-Thuto was developed using open source technology, including XHTML and SQL, to support use on mobile phone platforms with all the learning content available online. The interface was then designed to support basic types of mobile phones, in order to allow access for learners with different types of mobile phones.

The content of M-Thuto includes class notes, class exercises, class quizzes and other materials required by learners "to support their education - allowing both classroom and ubiquitous learning support" said Ms Jantjies. "Each page of content enabled the learners to view it in either English or Setswana, with the learner able to press a button at any time to change the language view."

Provided by University of Warwick

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