

‘African Start-Up’: Little Ashford Preschool, South Africa

CNN meets the founder, Jena Mukina

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In the trendiest suburbs of Johannesburg, traditional means of teaching are being transformed by the introduction of cutting-edge technology into pre-school classrooms in the South African capital.

This week, CNN’s ‘African Start-Up’ features Jena Mukina, education entrepreneur and the founder of Little Ashford Preschool, a school where tablets are just as important as books, pencils and paintbrushes.

Founded in 2009, Little Ashford Preschool was founded after Mukina was unable to find a suitable day-care centre for her own daughter. Today there are eight of Mukina’s boutique pre-schools, employing 135 members of staff.

Mukina explains what makes these schools unique to ‘Africa Start-Up’:

“We are one of the first preschools in Africa to introduce the iPad in the classroom. One of our primary goals is to ensure that we prepare our children for the future so that they are able to succeed in the digital age.”

With Little Ashford Preschools teaching over 500 children across Johannesburg, Mukina stresses to ‘African Start-Up’ that their use of technology is to enhance, not replace, traditional teaching methods.

Mukina tells the segment: “We’re not taking away anything from the traditional ways of teaching and learning. We just enhancing their learning experiences. So all the kids still get to play outside to have fun and to experience preschool the way preschool should be experienced.”

For Little Ashcroft Preschools, the child-friendly interface of a tablet allows for a more interactive learning experience, and all downloaded apps are educational and age appropriate.

However, despite the accessibility of tablets, ‘African Start-Up’ learns that their usage is strictly supervised, and screen time is capped from five minutes per day for two year olds, and 15 minutes for older children.

With parents paying an average of \$280 per month in school fees, the capital-intensive nature of the venture is undoubtedly a challenge for Mukina, as well as employing the appropriate staff to fully utilise the new

technology.

Mukina tells 'African Start-Up' how the company is approaching these challenges: "We call ourselves a learning organisation, so everybody's here to learn, whether it's the teachers, parents, our entire community is here to learn."

'African Start-Up' learns of Mukina's belief that the introduction of technology at pre-school level signals an overhaul of outdated teaching models across Africa.

Looking to the future of Little Ashcroft Preschools, Mukina tells 'African Start-Up': "Nelson Mandela once said that education is a weapon that one can use to change the world, and that's what we're here to do. We're here to change the continent. We're here to change the world through education and with the use of technology."