

CASE STUDY

# How Mobile Apps Can Improve Access to Quality Education



School kids access a smartphone while waiting for class to start. Photo credit: ADB

*A Finnish startup is giving everyone everywhere access to mobile learning tools to close the education gap caused by technology.*

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## Overview

When it comes to education, there are basically two problems: either people do not have access to learning tools or have access to poor-quality education. And while technology is changing the world at an astonishing pace, education systems have failed to keep up, said Aape Pohjavirta, Chief Evangelist and Founder of Funzi, at the [Asian Development Bank's 7th International Skills Forum](#).

The Finland-based startup is making learning accessible to everyone by using a tool that can already be found everywhere: mobile phones. Through mobile learning, Funzi wants to create new job opportunities and more employable people worldwide.

# Challenges

Global demand for education is rising but the traditional models of learning will simply not be able to grow in step with the rise in global population numbers, said Mr. Pohjavirta.

At the same time, rapid automation, or the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution, is expected to see artificial intelligence or machines replacing humans, especially in highly repetitive low-skill jobs. Thus, mobile learning will be an effective platform to re-train the workforce to address current skill gaps and increase the use of continuous learning.

# Solutions

Funzi's mobile application is free to download. Mobile users get compact learning cards (a mix of theory and visual learning) daily on their phone, take quizzes to assess their skills and receive an official certification once they finish the course. A fee is only taken for the certification and can be paid by a third party like the government or an employer.

In every area where it operates, Funzi aims to build an ecosystem of three parties: a content partner, a local partner who knows the community, and a commercial partner who has a vested interest in ensuring that learning occurs within the community — be it NGOs, public organizations, or global brands with a social mission.

## Numbers and facts

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February 2014 Funzi was founded

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Over 5 million all-time users from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East

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4 learning themes: livelihood, health and wellness, migration, and global citizenship

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25% return the next day, 40% return the next month (retention of active users)

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20% to 40% completion in weekly topics

# Results

Funzi believes learning and education improve employment and wellbeing, boosts entrepreneurship and even prospects for peace.

In Africa, the continent that inspired its mission and where it derived its name (Funzi comes from “funza,” which means “learning” in Swahili), the company is running the largest mobile entrepreneurship course that started out with localized content for Swahili-speaking areas such as Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania.

In South Africa, it runs an entrepreneurial training program in community centers where 230 individuals

and 32 companies participated.

In Europe, Funzi provides mobile services that aim to solve key problems of asylum seekers in the European Union, more specifically relating to integration, employment, and education. Its first learning package, "About Finland," helps to develop skills that can be utilized in everyday life and contribute to the student's integration into Finnish society. The first learning package consists of five courses relating to Finland, language and communication skills, everyday life and legal rights.

An Arabic version of its African entrepreneurship course is used as part of integration services for immigrants who speak Arabic.

## Lessons

Digital models such as mobile learning offer new and effective routes for re-skilling as well as addressing widespread labor shortages.

## Resources

[Finnish Startup Plans to Educate Billions Worldwide. Good News from Finland.](#) 10 August 2015.

[How to Enhance Skills Development with Digital Learning.](#) Development Asia.

[Five Ways to Use Information and Communication Technology for Education.](#) Development Asia.

## Related Links

Event: [7th ADB International Skills Forum](#)



### [Aape Pohjavirta](#)

Chief Evangelist and Founder, Funzi

Aape Pohjavirta is the Chief Evangelist and Founder of Funzi, a mobile learning and information service for the emerging markets. He sits on advisory boards of multiple research projects and technology programs and has worked in the mobile industry since 1997 in various management roles.

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