2013 Digital Essay Competition Report
For: Ministry of Education, Science & Technology

31st January 2014
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

eKitabu is Kenya’s leading retailer of ebooks with over 300,000 titles from local and international publishers including KICD-approved educational content for the Kenyan 8-4-4 curriculum. In 2013 in accord with eKitabu’s mission to achieve transformative educational outcomes through the use of digital content, eKitabu invited over 6,000 public and private schools across Kenya to submit essays online at http://essay.ekitabu.com in the 2013 Digital Essay Competition. The Competition ran through August and September for two categories of students: Upper Primary (Class 5 - 8) and all Secondary School pupils. The title of the essay was: How Will Technology Improve My Learning?

The 2013 Competition received 718 essays from 85 schools across 27 counties of Kenya. The purpose of this document is to summarize the results, process and lessons learned from 2013 for the sake of greater understanding and quality improvements for 2014.
2013 Partners included leading Kenyan educational publishers, the Kenya Publishers Association (KPA), the Kenya Primary School Heads Association (KEPSHA), the Kenya Private School Association (KPSA), Elimu, Intel, Samsung and Text Book Centre. The Competition was approved by:

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

REPUBLIC OF KENYA
Ref: MOE/QAS/N/1/100A

2013 LESSONS LEARNED

1. The process of running the Digital Essay Competition requires elaborate and early planning.
2. More engagement with the County Directors of Education and District Education Officers is necessary for widest reach.
3. Explore more channels, partners and media to generate awareness among schools.
4. Leave at least two months for submission of essays, ideally a whole school term.
5. Be prepared for submission of essays in various formats including paper.
6. Select and invite second round judges early to provide adequate time for their scheduling.
7. Leave more time, at least two weeks, between first round judging and second round judging.
8. Give second round judges the Finalist scripts in advance to improve efficiency of second round judging.
9. Leave adequate time between the second round judging and the final awards ceremony to ensure that finalists and winners have adequate time to attend the awards.
II. OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS
As 2013 was the first running of the Digital Essay Competition, the eKitabu team and other stakeholders collaborated closely throughout to develop and deliver a program that had integrity accepting there would also be considerable room for improvement. The teachers’ strike in July and August of 2013 had impact on timing, communications and availability of key stakeholders at all levels of the educational system. However, the overall Competition process flow as designed in May 2013 was sound, requiring no major rework even with the strike. Changes along the way were mainly changes in dates, for example the closing deadline, which was extended by two weeks in recognition of the strike-shortened school term.

The sections below depict and describe in detail the stages of the 2013 Competition process.

DIGITAL ESSAY COMPETITION PROCESS FLOW

I. DISCOVERY
- School Websites
- Banners
- Posters
- Media Launch
- Bulk SMS

II. PARTICIPATION
- Registration
- Essay Writing
- Essay Submission

III. JUDGING
- Judging Criteria
- Judges Selection
- Round 1
- Reporting
- Round 2

IV. AWARDS
- Finalists
- Top 3 Primary
- Top 3 Secondary
- Schools
- Principals
- Teachers
STAGE I. DISCOVERY/AWARENESS

eKitabu created awareness of the Competition through:

a. School Website Banners

Three hundred and fifteen schools got banners on their websites with information about the Competition:

- 133 Primary schools
- 182 Secondary schools

Banners, for example the one below, ran throughout the duration of the Competition.

![Banner Example](image_url)
b. Bulk SMS To Schools

eKitabu’s presence at 2013 national events, conferences and expositions such as KSSHA, KEPSHA and Book Fairs helped grow its list of school contacts, especially with school head teachers and teachers who visited our stand during these events. They provided us with school phone numbers or phone numbers for the head teachers.

With these contacts and more from partner company Elimu, we reached schools with information about the Competition using bulk SMS delivered by Elimu. This information we delivered was, in chronological order:

- Launch of the Competition
- Registration instructions
- Deadlines for essay submission
- Final results

c. Posters & Letters To Schools

Even though it was the first Digital Essay Competition in the country, we believed the program should have a national scope. We contacted at least ten schools in every county of Kenya with letters and posters, five schools from each category (Upper Primary and Secondary) through the national courier Posta. We sent letters to all County Education Directors and accompanied them with posters to be pinned on their notice boards. We also sent posters to 700 Nairobi schools through the City Education Director’s office.

d. Calls to County Education Headquarters

We made calls to the County Education Directors’ offices requesting them to pass information about the Competition to the schools in their districts. These offices were also helpful in enabling us to contact the award winning schools and students at later stages of the Competition.
STAGE II. PARTICIPATION
Entrants were encouraged to use the online essay submission platform at http://essay.eKitabu.com. We kept the online registration and submission process simple to minimize barriers to online submission:

   a. Registration

Students registered to participate in the Competition by creating an account on the eKitabu web page with their personal and school details. The system issued unique user IDs to all users on completion of the registration process.

   b. Essay Submission

On completion of the online registration entrants could type in or paste in their essays. The platform allowed entrants to update or make changes on their essays at any time until they were satisfied with the final version, so long as they made changes prior to the final essay submission deadline.

Some schools called to request other means by which their students could submit essays as they faced ICT equipment constraints. Not all the schools had access to Internet nor enough computers for students type their entries. In light of these facts we accepted all submissions whether electronic or on paper.

STAGE III. JUDGING
Two rounds of judging were necessary:

   a) First Round Judging

Before the essay submission deadline eKitabu recruited a panel of teachers recommended by The Nation newspaper. These were teachers with high levels of experience in essay marking, most of them national examiners in primary school or
secondary school categories. In advance of the Competition, the judges sat together as a team and to define marking criteria (see below).

The first round judging grouped the essays into two categories: Upper Primary (Class 5 - 8) and Secondary (Form 1 - 4). The essays were then read and marked. The essays that received the highest marks, ten from each category (Finalist Essays), were selected to proceed to the Second Round judging.

b) Second Round Judging

The judges in this stage were a group of eminent persons: CEOs of Kenyan publishing firms; School Directors/Heads; and University Professors. The second round judging took place at the University of Nairobi. Judges read the Finalist essays and scored them to select First, Second and Third Prize Winners in each of the two categories.

FIRST ROUND JUDGES’ PROFILE

Judging Coordinators

1. Hezekiel Gikambi Peter
2. Stephen Mwangi Macharia

Hezekiel Gikambi holds a Bachelor of Education (Arts) Honours degree (Kiswahili & History and Government) holder from the University Of Nairobi and a Post Graduate International Diploma in Sales Management and Marketing from Cambridge International College (UK), a professional development course in Research Methods & Project Cycle Management with Eastern Institute for Research and Training, a Certificate in Digital Media Management from Rhodes University in South Africa, a Post graduate Diploma course in Journalism and Mass Communication at Kenyatta University and currently taking a MA-Swahili Studies course at the University of Nairobi. He is the Project Manager of Swahilihub, a digital project of Taifa Leo and Mwananchi publications (Tanzania) of Nation Media Group, that produces a world class daily news Swahili site. He has been the Education Features Editor and former pioneer columnist and editor of the weekly Mbwembwe-Jarida kabambe la wasomi chipukizi, a two page student’s/school buzz magazine on Taifa Leo every Wednesday. He has taught Kiswahili and History and Government at high school level and in colleges for over 15 years most of which he examined.
Stephen Macharia holds a Master of Arts degree in Linguistics and a Bachelor of Education in Linguistics and Literature from the University of Nairobi. He has taught and examined students at high school level for 5 years. He currently teaches Communication Skills at Strathmore University as well as consulting at the Strathmore Writing Centre.

High School Examiners
Paschalia Munyiva heads the Department of Languages at Riara Springs Girls High School. She has 18 years of teaching experience at high school level. She holds a Bachelor of Education (English) degree from Maseno University. She is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Communication degree at Daystar University.

Primary School Examiners
Julia Nairesiae is a seasoned teacher of English at Lenana Primary School with an experience of over 19 years. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Science from Kenyatta University. She has served as a national examiner of English compositions.

Fridah Kisoya is 44yrs old and has been a teacher since 1989. In 1992 to 1994 she trained as a P1. From 2001 to 2006 she earned her B.Ed in Linguistics and Literature at the University of Nairobi, graduated in 2008. From 2010 to date she has been doing her M.Ed at Moi University. She is an Examiner with KNEC in PTE Education Paper 1011. She also works part time in Teacher Administration and Philosophy at Mwingi Eastview Teachers College.

JUDGING CRITERIA (ACTUAL FINAL CRITERIA USED)
Each essay must reflect the contestant's own research, writing and original thinking. Any essay that the judges may deem to have been written by someone else will be disqualified.

a. Factors to weigh in assessing overall quality of essays

The final winners should reflect regional, gender and social balance, but not to the exclusion of overall essay quality according to the scoring criteria below which should be the major determining factors in deciding winners. Received essays will be categorized in two groups: Upper Primary School and Secondary School essays.

The following characteristics will be noted as factors to weigh in judging each essay:

a. Private/ public schools
b. Urban/rural schools
c. Gender of the writer: male vs. female
d. Grade level

The essays will be judged using five criteria as indicated on the scoring sheet below. Rate each of the five tested skills through within a scale of 1-20, with 20 as the highest score. Add the five categories to reach the candidate's final percentage score.

**Essay Number __________**

I. **Comprehension (1-20 points) __________**
   How well does the essay reflect a thorough comprehension of the issues required through the essay question? Creative essays should be approached from many unusual ways (questions can be answered as essays, stories, dialog, and so on). They should still, in some way, respond to the chosen topic.

II. **Organization (1-20 points) __________**
   Does the argument follow a logical and easily understood progression? Does corroborating evidence support the essay's main points?

III. **Conclusions (1-20 points) __________**
    Do the conclusions follow logically from the argument? How compelling are the conclusions?

IV. **Creativity (1-20 points) __________**
    Portrayal of an innovative and creative angle on the issue.

V. **Writing (1-20 points) __________**
    Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. Concise language.

**Final Score __________**

Marking schemes: criteria related to grade bands
The individual judges will present the essays they categorized in grade A to the lead judge who will allocate them to different judges to do the grading again and identify the best among them. The panel of judges will then agree on the 10 to pick based on the above categories.

b. Essay competition results

For both Secondary and Primary school categories, at least the best 10 contestants will be selected and their names and essays handed over to the CEO of eKitabu.

FINAL RESULTS
The Competition received 718 essays from 85 schools across 27 counties. The charts that follow summarize the 2013 results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSAY SUBMISSION</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOLS</td>
<td>PRIMARY</td>
<td>SECONDARY</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDENTS</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By gender the entrants were:

![Gender Pie Chart]

**FINALISTS**
After the first judging we had 29 candidates (Finalists) whose essays proceeded to the second round judging. These candidates produced quality essays and were all recognized by the eKitabu for outstanding efforts.

The following charts give a representation of all Finalists’ data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSAY COMPETITION FINALISTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By gender the Finalists were:

ESSAY COMPETITION FINALISTS

PRIMARY SCHOOL FINALISTS
We had 12 Primary School Finalists from 10 schools in 8 counties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY SCHOOL CATEGORY</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>COUNTIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were 3 male and 9 female finalists in the Primary School category:

![Pie chart showing 75% female and 25% male finalists.]

SECONDARY SCHOOLS FINALISTS
From the secondary category we had 17 finalists from 15 schools in 10 counties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORY</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>COUNTIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By gender the Secondary School Finalists were:

![Finalist Gender Representation Chart]

**STAGE IV. AWARDS**

All the Finalists were of equal opportunity and had produced outstanding essays per the judging criteria. All were awarded Finalist certificates during the Nairobi International Book fair held on 29th September 2013.

The prizewinners received:

1. For the 1st prize winners in both Primary and Secondary categories, scholarship money of Kenya shillings 40,000 and Kenya shillings 10,000 for uniform.

2. Four Devices (Samsung Tablets) for the 1st prize winner, his/her head teacher, his/her class teacher, and finally a device for his/her ICT school ICT champion these applied to both categories, Primary and Secondary school.

3. For the 2nd prize winners in both Primary and Secondary categories, scholarship money of Kenya Shillings 20,000 and uniform money of Kenya shillings 5,000.

4. For the 3rd prize winners in both Primary and Secondary categories, uniform money of Kenya shillings 10,000.
In summary, the Digital Essay Competition in 2013 may also be represented as follows:

**BENEFITS OF THE DIGITAL ESSAY COMPETITION**

1. Encourages students to develop and use digital technologies.
2. Enhances creativity and critical thinking amongst students.
3. Gives the students an opportunity to reflect on how best they can use technology to enhance their education.
LESSONS LEARNT IN 2013
The 2013 Digital Essay Competition was the first ever of its kind in Kenya. Major lessons learnt included:

1. There was great interest among teachers and students in embracing technology in learning.
2. Despite our making available a system for online submission of essays, most schools submitted their essays on paper, then sent scanned versions to us. This was indicative of the limited access to computers and Internet in most schools, which did not deter students and schools from participating.
3. The overall quality of essays submitted was very high and demonstrated knowledge about the subject, creativity, and enthusiasm about use of technology in learning.
4. The timing of the Competition launch just before the August holidays meant that many of the schools actively began encouraging students to participate only at the start of the new term, which gave them a deadline of three weeks to submit the essays. Many students therefore missed the deadline.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2014
1. The process of running the Digital Essay Competition requires elaborate and early planning.
2. More engagement with the County Directors of Education and District Education Officers is necessary for widest reach.
3. Explore more channels, partners and media to generate awareness among schools.
4. Leave at least two months for submission of essays, ideally a whole school term.
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PLANS FOR 2014 eKitabu DIGITAL ESSAY COMPETITION

This year’s Digital Essay Competition will be held from April. The submission dates will be open from 14<sup>th</sup> April 2014 and will close on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014. Winners will announced at the awards ceremony on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

Students will register and submit their essays through http://essay.ekitabu.com/

The Competition gives students in Kenya the chance to contribute to the integration of ICT in learning, to help them develop critical thinking and innovative minds. For an example of students envisioning their own Kenyan future, please see the picture that follows, submitted by 2013 DEC Finalist Esther Hope Wahu of Bishop Gatimu Ngandu Girls High School in Nyeri, Judges’ Special Prize Winner for Creativity. Ms. Wahu went above and beyond the 300-word essay she also submitted with this picture thereby giving us all a window into her bright world.
Esther Hope Wahu - Nyeri

NAME: ESTHER HOPE WAHU
SCHOOL: BISHOP GATimu NGANDU GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL’S NAME: JANE KIRAGURI
Tel. No: 0702436570 / 0202052716

My research will become faster, easier and more organized both mentally and physically.
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