Newsflash · communities stop poverty · ◈ firelight

6 November 2014

Dear Friends,

At the beginning of the month, we looked at different viewpoints of using mobile technology to improve education in Africa. This is Part Two in that series. While some believe tech can solve many of the challenges of providing quality education, others are quite skeptical. The fact remains that there are both challenges and opportunities within this field. We are learning lessons as more attempts are made to improve education in Africa and other developing areas using new technology or using 'old' technology in new ways.

In this Newsflash you will find a few resources that summarize some important lessons in using technology in education. The first discusses 10 promising uses of technology in developing countries. The second gives us the 10 Worst Practices in using technology in education. It is a quick overview that identifies mistakes that have been made in the past in hopes that they will not be repeated.

If your organization has stories about successes or failures in using technology in education projects, please feel free to share them with us at education@firelightfoundation.org. We would love to hear about your experiences, successes, or challenges related to the topic.

We hope you enjoy this week's edition of the Newsflash!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

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(Resource) Promising uses of technology in education in poor, rural and isolated communities around the world

by Michael Trucano originally published on the World Bank's EduTech blog, 22 July 2014

One persistent challenge for educational policymakers and planners related to the potential use of informational and communication technologies (ICTs) in remote, low income communities around the world is that most products, services, usage models, expertise, and research related to ICT use in education come from high-income contexts and environments.

One consequence is that technology-enabled 'solutions' are imported and 'made to fit' into what are often much more challenging environments. When they don't work, or where they are too expensive to be replicated at any scale, this is taken as 'evidence' that ICT use in education in such places is irrelevant -- and possibly irresponsible.

That said, lessons are being learned as a result of emerging practices, both good and bad, in the use of ICTs in education in low resource, poor, rural and isolated communities in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific that may be useful to help guide the planning and implementation of educational technology initiatives in such environments. (It may even turn out that the technological innovations that emerge from such places many have a wider relevance …. but that is a topic for another discussion.)

Some principles or approaches to consider when planning to introduce ICTs into remote, low-income educational environments might include:

- The best technology is the one you already have, know how to use, and can afford (in most cases, this is increasingly the mobile phone)
- Start down and out, and then move up and in (if you want to eventually work in difficult places at scale, *start* working there first, don't just go where things are most likely to work)
- Treat teachers like the problem … and they will be
- It's the content, not the container (don't focus on devices, but rather on what actions these devices enable – and make sure not to be diverted by various related myths and misconceptions)
- If you are pointed in the wrong direction, technology may help you get there more quickly
- Anticipate, and mitigate, Matthew Effects (people who are already privileged in many ways are more likely to benefit first, and most, from new technologies)
- To succeed in doing something difficult, you may first need to fail (and learn from this failure)
- Put sustainability first
- We know a lot about worst practices -- we should make sure we don't repeat them
- ____ (there are many more such principles to consider, of course, so #10 is left blank as an acknowledgement of this fact – and that we still have much to learn)

To view the entire article, visit: http://bit.ly/10C5jdS

(Resource) Worst practice in technology use in education

by Michael Trucano originally published on the World Bank's EduTech blog, 30 April 2014

In business and in international development circles, much is made about the potential for 'learning from best practice'. Considerations of the use of educational technologies offer no exception to this impulse. That said, 'best practice' in the education sector is often a rather elusive concept (at best! some informed observers would say it is actually dangerous). The term 'good practice' may be more useful, for in many (if not most) cases and places, learning from and adapting 'good' practices is often much more practical -- and more likely to lead to success. Given that many initiatives seem immune to learning from either 'best' or even 'good' practice in other places or contexts, it may be most practical to recommend 'lots of practice', as there appears to be a natural learning curve that accompanies large scale adoption of ICTs in the education sector in many countries -- even if this means 'repeating the mistakes' of others.

But do we really need to repeat the mistakes of others? If adopting 'best practice' is fraught with difficulties, and 'good practice' often noted but ignored, perhaps it is useful instead to look at 'worst practice'. The good news is that, in the area of ICT use in education, there appears to be a good deal of agreement about what this is!

Here's a list of some of what I consider to be the preeminent 'worst practices' related to the large scale use of ICTs in education in developing countries, based on first hand observation over the past dozen or so years. I have omitted names (please feel free to fill them in yourself). The criterion I used for selection was simple: The given worst practice was easily observable in multiple prominent initiatives, with (one fears) a high likelihood of re-occurrence, in the same or other places.

(Worst Practices) In no particular order:

- Dump hardware in schools, hope for magic to happen
- Design for OECD learning environments, implement elsewhere
- Think about educational content only after you have rolled out your hardware
- Assume you can just import content from somewhere else
- Don't monitor, don't evaluate
- Make a big bet on an unproven technology (especially one based on a closed/proprietary standard) or single vendor, don't plan for how to avoid 'lock-in
- Don't think about (or acknowledge) total cost of ownership/operation issues or calculations
- Assume away equity issues
- Don't train your teachers (nor your school headmasters, for that matter)
- ___ [I thought I would leave #10 blank as an acknowledgement that there are many additional worst practices that merit mention, but I have run out of

space.

To view more explanations of these 10 Worst Practices, visit: http://bit.ly/1DCKDOR

(Accepting Letters of Inquiry) Putting Women and Girls at the Center of Development : Grand Challenge to Reach and Empower the Women to Improve Health and Development

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is accepting Letter of Inquiry (LOI) for Putting Women and Girls at the Center of Development grant opportunity. A new grand challenges under the grand challenges in global health, Putting Women and Girls at the Center of Development focuses on how to effectively reach and empower the most vulnerable women and girls to improve health and development – including economic – outcomes as well as gender equality.

The grant will fund innovative solutions that effectively reach the most vulnerable women and girls to simultaneously improve their health; offer development and economic outcomes for them, their families and communities; and empower women and girls and promote gender equality.

Grant Types

- 2-year exploratory grants – US$500,000 to support the initial development and validation of solutions.
- 4-year full grants – US$2.5 million to develop, refine, and rigorously test larger multi-sectoral approaches.

Programmatic areas

- Urban sanitation
- Financial services for the poor
- Agricultural development
- HIV/AIDS
- Family planning
- Maternal, newborn and child health
- Nutrition
- Emergency relief

Letter of Inquiry (LOI) requirement

- A discussion of Women and Girls Engagement
- A brief logic model between the planned intervention and outcomes of interest and a plan for measuring and evaluating the proposed solution/project

Deadline: 13 January 2015

For more info, visit: http://bit.ly/1wgQsl3

(Call for Submissions) Pan-African Awards for Entrepreneurship in Education: US$75,000 to Innovative projects Combating Poverty

All Africa based organizations working in education (primary, secondary, tertiary education; non-formal and adult education) and combating poverty in an innovative, sustainable and effective way are invited to participate in Pan-African Awards for Entrepreneurship in Education. Teach a Man to Fish is seeking for organizations or projects making great changes in their community.

Prizes

- US$10,000 – Best entry award
- US$5,000 each – Two runner ups
- US$1,000 each – 55 best entries from each African country
- Top three award winners will be offered a sponsored trip to the international conference and peer-learning workshop of Teach a man to fish.
- Media publicity and enhanced sponsorship and donation opportunities are other benefits.

Eligibility Criteria

- Applicants can be organizations in any African country focusing on education.
- Applying professionals can be teachers, doctors, lawyers, judges, accountants, bankers, engineers, and police officers.
- Organizations outside Africa can submit entries on behalf of their African partner. The African organization will be beneficiary in this condition.
- Entries must be accompanied by work contact details of a suitable referee. Referees must be independent of entrant organization and either a government official, qualified professional, or senior employee of an internationally recognized institution. Referees cannot be family members of the entrant.
- List of eligible countries: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde,Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo (Democratic Republic of the), Congo-Brazzaville (Republic of the Congo), Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon,Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe,Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania,Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Western Sahara, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Deadline: 12 December 2014

For more information and instructions on how to apply, visit: http://bit.ly/10C6p9x

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As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: http://www.firelightfoundation.org/resources/newsflash

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at newsletter@firelightfoundation.org

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