Innovations in smart phone based professional development

Conference or Workshop Item

How to cite:

For guidance on citations see FAQs.

© [not recorded]

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher’s website:

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online’s data policy on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk
Innovations in smart phone based professional development

CHARLOTTE CHISHAVA, NATIONAL COORDINATOR, TEACHING AND LEARNING SPECIALIST, SAGE, PLAN ZIMBABWE

STEPHEN HARRISON, SENIOR LECTURER, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION CHILDHOOD YOUTH AND SPORT, OPEN UNIVERSITY
The Context

- The SAGE Zimbabwe project is funded by UK Aid from the UK government.
- It is formed by a consortium, led by Plan International UK and including faith-based, academic (Open University) and private sector actors.
- Its focus is on providing high-quality, accelerated, non-formal education in, accessible, girlfriendly community-based Learning Hubs.

- 400 Hub Volunteers
- 75 School Buddies
- 88 Learning Hubs
- 11 Districts
- 8660 Learners
- 75 School Buddies
The Challenge

Surge in covid-19 cases during May –June 2020. Persistent lockdowns making volunteer access a challenge due to movement restrictions.

Need to continue learning for the girls amidst concerns around disengagement and ‘learning loss’.

Ongoing need to induct new volunteer recruitments and replacements.

Over 70% of volunteers have access to smartphones, creating opportunity for WhatsApp low-cost trainings and engagements.

Volunteers reported competence gaps in supporting girls with disabilities (31%) and remote teaching (85%) (date when the survey was taken).
A rapid and pragmatic response to the new context:

CoVid 19 restrictions heralded the need for refocus and reframe ‘hub volunteer’ practice in line with move from ‘Hub’ based learner engagement to telephone and later small group engagement.

The widespread use of and access to WhatsApp within Zimbabwe provided a means of communication and engagement in real time at scale.

Within the context of ongoing efforts to embed reflective practices within the programme, a new model of professional development was adopted along with bespoke learning materials.
Structured Guided Reflection: Example of Model 1 Learning Material

Strengthening Learning Conversations: Principles into Practice

Principles: 'Starting where learners are':
During your recent contact with learners you have achieved a greater understanding of learner progress. By now you have first-hand experience of some of the challenges you face and some of the ways in which these can be overcome. This support tool is designed to help you focus on one aspect of engaging learners and strengthening learning conversations: ‘Starting where learners are’.

Starting where learners are involves:
- Understanding learner achievements to date and starting with returning to the last successful point of learning (LSP) i.e. the last concept or activity within a module the learner was able to engage with.
- Being willing to engage learner to develop skills which appeared in earlier units within the module such as phonics or number recognition.
- Each new conversation seeking to understand what the learner has done with her learning since the last conversation.

Practices:
- Listen carefully to what learners are saying about what they can do confidently. Find activities which support learner development (these may feature within earlier units). It is important to build on learner competence to support progress.
- Be aware of the different stages a learner may be at in relation to literacy and numeracy. A student may be at an advanced stage in a module regarding literacy whilst struggling in earlier stages with numeracy. Identify activities and set tasks that are appropriate to development in both areas.
- Keep a record of context and learner progress to strengthen future learning conversations.
- Review learner progress with other Hub Volunteer and your NPE Buddies in order to reflect on how best to support individual students.

Miss Nicube’s Initial Contact Record:

Case Study:
Miss Nicube has had a busy couple of weeks contacting learners. One learner Miss Nicube successfully contacted was Tashikwa a 15-year-old young woman from her learning hub. Whilst preparing for her follow-up conversation with Tashikwa, Miss Nicube consulted her contact record to remind herself of what she had learned about Tashikwa’s last successful point of learning and what she had agreed with Tashikwa in terms of what she would focus on between telephone calls.

| Learner | Initial call | Follow up call | LCP Literacy | LCP Numeracy | Agree to do
|---------|--------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| MAS Nicube | 20/05/2020 | 06/05/2020 | TM has a good grasp of single letter sounds. And some combined letters. TM is comfortable up to module 5. | TM has good number knowledge from 1 - 10. But struggles with numbers beyond 10. TM is comfortable up to module 5. | To develop study skills.
|           |              |                |               |             | To practice letter soundings. (6 weeks.)
|           |              |                |               |             | To practice adding numbers beyond 10 using the 1-100 number square. Prioritising the numbers she does not know.
|           |              |                |               |             | CALL TM by SP, JUNE at 4pm. |
Developing the training model:

**Model 1**
- Principles into Practice
- Case study alongside examples of practice
- Top tips
- Reflection and discussion in large groups

**Model 2**
- Aspects of practice
- Activity based engagement in small groups
- Share insights
- Ongoing reflection on practice
Facilitator capacity building

- Provide clear and detailed session guidance and notes
- Incorporation of feedback into programme development
- Facilitator capacity building
- Provide briefings/session run throughs
- Communication and support through side discussion thread
- Co-facilitation
- Reflection on practice during and post session
Learning:

“The strength of the WhatsApp platform was reach! As long as people had access to a smartphone and network it allowed us to reach out to the people.”

“The case studies allowed participants to easily relate to the issues we needed to explore. Starting with a story made it easy for participants to visualise their own classes, their own practices and what they would do in such cases.”

“Facilitating in WhatsApp was new to me and there were challenges initially in establishing the conversation flow. But later, we became familiarised with the guiding question and were able to take advantage of the group sessions to make sure everyone participates.”

WhatApp as a platform:
Using established communication resources and practices key in securing engagement and participation.

Learning support materials:
Contextualised support materials reflecting a clear understanding of practice context support exploration of issues and practice principles.

Facilitation of professional development as a distance:
Co-facilitation and parallel reflection on practice supports on going development of approach and facilitation expertise.

Impact on participants:
Over time the level and quality of participation became more sophisticated on the part of participants and facilitators. District coordinators report clear evidence of translation of professional development into practice settings.
Thank You! / Tatenda! / Dankie!