Innovating for quality

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mobile learning week

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Event subthemes

The overarching theme of Mobile Learning Week 2016 is 'innovating for quality'. The event will examine three interlinked subthemes to advance understandings about how mobile learning and related innovations can improve the quality of education:

Subtheme 1: Making high-quality education a reality for all learners

Currently opportunities to receive quality education are unevenly distributed. Geography, class and gender are primary determinates. Mobile technology offers a vehicle to help bring high-quality learning to people who did not previously have access to it.

Questions that will anchor this subtheme include:

- What strategies can ensure that widely owned mobile devices facilitate the learning of **groups that are underserved** educationally, including economically disadvantaged families, women and girls, people with disabilities, and people living in rural areas? With humanitarian crises in the Middle East and Asia showing little signs of abating in the near future, how can mobile technology support the learning of refugees and others displaced by conflict, while also assisting their integration into new communities?

- What are the characteristics of high-quality mobile learning content? What models will prompt the production and wide dissemination of this **content**? How can mobile technologies accelerate the use and sharing of OERs and, simultaneously, better support speakers of minority languages?

- How can mobile learning improve **equity** in education? Technology-dependent learning platforms such as MOOCs have often helped students who are already succeeding academically, but they have been less effective in narrowing achievement gaps. What strategies can help ensure underachieving students are supported by mobile learning initiatives and given opportunities to catch up with higher-performing peers?

Subtheme 2: Improving pedagogy and the relevance of learning

Many educators are not effectively trained to facilitate learning. Mobile technology can help support teachers and make instruction more effective. It can also enable new pedagogies that improve the quality and relevance of learning.

Questions that will anchor this subtheme include:

- How can mobile technology build the capacities of **teachers**, helping ensure they are able to provide high-quality instruction? What is the role and place of teachers in an era of smartphones and ubiquitous information? How is teacher professionalism preserved as technology continues to make deeper inroads in education?

- What **pedagogies** support learning with digital technologies? Many schools have experimented with 'bring your own device' policies in an effort to facilitate technology use in schools in a cost-effective way. Is this model pedagogically viable, and if so, what teaching methods support the learning of students using different hardware and software? Some experts claim that technology distracts from the human conversations that lie at the heart of learning, and warn of impending over-reliance on technology in education and other spheres of life. What is the appropriate pedagogical balance of ICT-dependent and ICT-independent approaches to education?

- How can mobile devices **personalize learning** and improve **assessment**? ICTs can speed up feedback loops and help make learning more student-centric, but how has this been done in real-world settings and at scale? Some people have argued that due to the growing ubiquity of mobile devices, future assessments should allow, rather than prohibit, the use of internet-connected technology. What is the future of assessment in an era of seamless internet access?

Subtheme 3: Enhancing management, planning and evaluation

In addition to expanding access and improving teaching and learning, mobile technology can strengthen the administration, planning and evaluation of education systems. More powerful and targeted data collection and analysis capabilities should help educators design teaching strategies better adapted to learners' needs, making education more effective and flexible. As more and more student learning moves to digital devices, the back-end data will provide a wealth of information that researchers can mine to prompt innovative ideas.

Questions that will anchor this subtheme include:

- How can mobile technology improve **education management** and **information systems**? Information forms the backbone of sound educational plans and policies. What examples exist of mobile devices helping ministries of education and other actors measure the performance, efficiency, needs and shortcomings of learning systems in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and formulate prescriptions?

- **Big data, cloud solutions** and **predictive analytics** hold promise for education. How have they been used in real-world settings to improve the quality and efficiency of learning? For the past two decades, a number of technology firms have used data to make fine-grained and highly accurate predictions about consumer behaviour. Are there examples of large data caches helping educators anticipate the needs of schools, teachers and students? How has big data helped education specialists make sense of the causes and conditions of school performance, teacher impact and student growth? Finally, as data capture techniques become more encompassing, how will student privacy be protected and assured?

- How can mobile technology help solve some of the long-standing and **system-wide problems** that adversely impact the quality of education, particularly in developing countries? Teacher absenteeism remains high in many parts of the world and corruption siphons money away from its intended purposes. Where and how has mobile technology been deployed to mitigate these problems? Lastly, while technology can solve problems, it can also introduce new ones. What new challenges are likely to be confronted as mobile technology becomes more deeply embedded in education?