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Using Mobile Technology to Enhance Learning Transfer

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Using Mobile Technology to Enhance Learning Transfer

on September 16, 2019
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By Corinne Brion, PhD, University of Dayton, U.S.A

Today, I invite you to Ghana to present the findings of a study that examined the extent to which mobile technology enhanced the transfer of learning post training. Seven school leaders from three different schools were interviewed after they attended a three-day leadership training. Additionally, I sent conversation triggers twice a week using WhatsApp. For this research study, WhatsApp was chosen to follow up after the three-day leadership training for several reasons: (1) the school leaders engaged on WhatsApp prior to the training for administrative purposes with the NGO Ghanaian staff; (2) school leaders are busy and have limited time to meet face to face to follow up and increase their learning; (3) even those who were absent during the training were invited to join the WhatsApp group if they were present on the last day; (4) following up by email is more difficult in a marginalized communities where few people own a computer and there is a shortage of electricity on a daily basis; and (5) cellular data are affordable in Ghana and most school leaders were already using WhatsApp for their personal use. WhatsApp is so pervasive in Ghana that is estimated that 90% of information flows through WhatsApp. Hence, WhatsApp was used to follow up post training, continue professional development, and create a community of learners.

The purpose of the WhatsApp group was to examine the extent to which mobile technology played a role in enhancing learning transfer. The WhatsApp platform was used as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) for everyone who participated in the three-day leadership training, provided that they were present on the last day of the training and had a Smart phone with the WhatsApp application. Everyone received the same message at the same time and was able to respond. WhatsApp allows anyone with access to a Smart phone and Wi-Fi to send individual and group messages anywhere in the world. It also allows sending and receiving photos, videos, recordings, and Word documents. I sent text messages via group texting.

Findings

Network and Peer Learning

The use of WhatsApp allowed the workshop participants to share information and "encouraged those who were not responding to questions to sit up." A woman leader added: "Comments from my colleagues always draw my attention back to what was learned at the workshop. The answers given were helpful and made us conscious of what others were doing. We got ideas and copied some ideas." Most participants shared that they were happy to hear from colleagues after the training, keeping "the good atmosphere and the training." Finally, one leader spoke of the fact that he learned vicariously and said "despite the fact that I never wrote thing on the platform I was reading all the messages and learned a lot from the others that way."

Gender, Peer Pressure, Motivation and Encouragement

All leaders suggested that being active on the WhatsApp platform was motivating because of the peer pressure. When leaders pictures on the phone of what colleagues improved in their schools, they would be inclined to do the same and share their progress on the platform. A leader shared: "When I see other schools making so many changes, I must make some too! I liked what some of my colleagues did and I must now try to do the same at my school. If they can do it, why can't I, I must at least try and show them." Another participant stated, "I do not go to the others' schools but I see pictures they send and it helps me to change too." Two other persons commented: "Usually after training, people feel reluctant to use what was learned but this gave us pressure and motivation and it always reminded us to do what we set to do." Participants also commented on the encouragement they would receive from other participants and from the group moderator when new learning was transferred.

Norms and Structure

All participants appreciated that the rules were clear and given before the intervention started. One leader referred to the norms as: "nothing to waste." According to him the norms promoted learning by staying on task. Two leaders stated that people who did not respect the rules were "detractors" and they appreciated when I intervened and restated the rules immediately. He stated it in this way "Let us stick to the reason for what the group was created. Not everyone is a fan on what others are posting."

All participants shared that they enjoyed the structure of the questioning and the quality of the questions. They enjoyed receiving a yes/no question on Mondays when it was busy and the open-ended questions on Fridays when they had the weekend to read, think and respond.

These two pictures were posted on the WhatsApp platform after the training. They exemplify how school leaders took the content of the training module on nutrition, made a poster of the food pyramid and invited parents to a PTA meeting on nutrition. A video of the meeting was also posted on the platform for everyone to see.
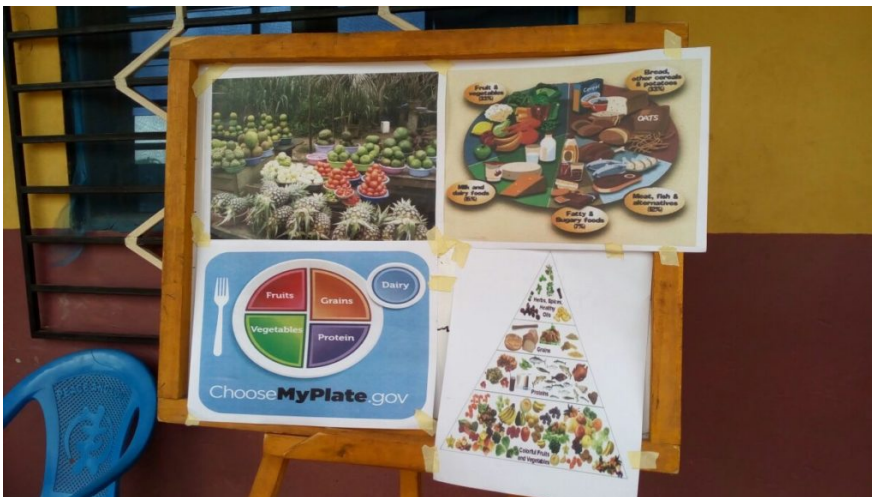
      This study could have a significant impact on how follow up around the world is conducted after a training, workshop or even a meeting. Applying learning transfer concepts and following up on them would not only ensure that training funds are well spent, but also contribute to reaching Goal Number 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals "Providing a Quality Education for All" by 2030.

      So, next time you plan a training, workshop or even a meeting, take into account learning transfer and if possible use mobile technology to follow up post training! If you are sharing this mindset, let's talk! For more on this study, please contact me or search for Keeping the learning going: using mobile technology to enhance learning transfer.

Educational Research for Policy and Practice (ERPP).1-16.

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   [October 14, 2019 at 9:58 am](#)

   Great News!
   Really appreciate the way you have written and explained. Worth reading it.
   Thanks for sharing it with us.
   Good work..!!

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