Collaborative Development of a Gaming-based ICT for Well-Being in India

Lessons from Critical Reflections on Participatory Approaches to ICT4D

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Universities are actively participating in information and communication technology for development (ICT4D) initiatives by moving beyond observatory research roles and assuming roles as facilitators, innovators and implementors (Waas, Verbruggen, & Wright, 2010) in multi-stakeholder initiatives. This study examines how a participatory approach paradigm (Teoh, Tan, Tan, & Chong, 2018) holds in an ICT4D collaboration focused on educating vulnerable populations in India about diabetes. Non-communicable diseases including diabetes, are a growing problem in India that disproportionately affect the poor, and now are the leading cause of death (Public Health Foundation of India, 2018).

This research reports on a collaboration between a US university and stakeholders from India including a mission hospital and two technology vendors. The team, applying a participatory based approach, across a distributed working environment developed a tablet-based gaming application focused on helping the most vulnerable populations prevent and treat diabetes. Motivated by improving the quality of participatory practice in ICT4D, this research analyzes the team's communication over a 15-month period utilizing a critical research lens that reveals theory-practice gaps. Drawing upon insights, critique and transformative prescriptions the critical research seeks through this gap analysis to promote change through alternative perspectives to the status quo (Myers & Klein, 2011). The gaps we find include those to key assumptions on active stakeholder participation, and challenges in balancing logic congruence and co-ownership. This research makes several contributions. First, it informs participatory approaches to research and development with greater critical realism. Second, it addresses the underrepresentation of critical research in information systems (Myers & Klein, 2011). Finally, it adds to a growing body of ICT4D research addressing global inequity.

References
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