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Pressing Pause to Fast Forward Technological Innovation for Education

When thinking about education in an uncertain world, the role of technology is at the forefront. As we collectively think about delivering more “relevant and effective” education for all, EdTech is receiving the greatest attention and being promoted as holding the most promise for success. Tablet-based or mobile phone-based educational tools are often viewed as being “disruptive” and going against the grain of doing “business as usual.” A myriad of organizations and agencies are stepping into the digital learning space and designing, prototyping, and rolling out new ‘EdTech’ products every week.

But to what end? Are we certain about ‘what works’ in leveraging technology for improved student learning? Are we giving enough pause to reflect on the challenges and shortcomings of EdTech? Are we designing our ‘EdTech’ solutions to respond adequately to the most pressing political, economic, educational, social and cultural uncertainties facing our students, teachers and communities today?

In other words, are we asking ourselves the right questions when leveraging digital opportunities to improve quality of education for all?

1. How do we better **deliver** technology at scale to improve education *systems*?
2. How do we better **measure** the impact of technology on *learning achievement*?
3. How do we better **sustain** EdTech through local and national levels of *ownership*?
4. How do we better **leverage** technology to equip learners not only with the basic numeracy and literacy skills, but also *21st century knowledge and values*?
5. How do we better **forge** new, thoughtful, and catalysing partnerships at local, national and global levels to bridge **digital divides** in educational opportunities for all?

Innovation must be the natural educational response to political and economic uncertainty. Uncertainty is supposed to be a time when innovation can thrive, new ideas are formed, and pressing problems are addressed. But many times, educational systems and development organizations remain risk-averse when there are limited funds and few human resources. We need to be less risk averse, but better informed with the decisions, investments, and deployments. Therefore, how can we press pause to fast forward technological innovations in education to improve the lifelong ladder of learning for all?