

Proposal for presentation at the 3rd ICT4D PG symposium

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Proposal from: David Hollow, PhD candidate at the ICT4D Collective, Royal Holloway, University of London.

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Thesis Title: Exploring alternative approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of ICT for education initiatives in Africa.

Proposal title: Working collaboratively with private-sector partners in the evaluation of ICT for education initiatives: reflections on challenges encountered in the field.

Abstract:

The field of ICT in Africa draws together the often disparate spheres of business and development. Where these two combine in the form of ICT for development related projects there are both major challenges to face and potential benefits to reap. This presentation will draw on recent fieldwork conducted in collaboration with private sector partners and Government ministries in Ethiopia and Malawi, providing illustrations and reflections on where such issues were encountered. Significant points include the difficulties of conflicting agendas, different priorities and mixed motivation alongside the benefits of mutual knowledge sharing, increased efficiency, rigour and effective resource allocation. Each of these is explored in reference to experiences from the fieldwork in the specific context of monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment of ICT for education programmes. It is the straightforward option for the academy to keep itself detached and therefore remain 'unpolluted' by the influence of private sector agendas in potentially compromising the research it undertakes. However, in light of current trends, the presentation will challenge the notion of 'pure' research as conventionally defined, arguing for critical collaboration as the stance which will help ensure that the spread of ICTs across the developing world is of maximum benefit to marginalised communities and individuals.