


Chapter 13

Technology–Integrated After–School Program: A Case Study of the DREAMS Intervention

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ABSTRACT

In the rapidly evolving context of the 21st century, education is experiencing a profound and transformative shift, driven by the emergence of digital technologies. This innovative paradigm seamlessly weaves technology into the very fabric of learning and administration, not only within the traditional school setting but also extending its transformative reach to affiliated initiatives like after-school programs. The aim of this chapter is to share the valuable insights and firsthand experiences gained from the integration of technology in the DREAMS program in both learning and project management. By sharing these learnings, the chapter aims to share the knowledge and best practices of adopting technology in any program.

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, technology integration in education was limited to usage of physical workbooks, practical games, and paper pen activities. However, integrating modern technology like video conferencing, mobile apps, and visual learning from videos is becoming critical for improving learning experiences and encouraging engagement (Kossybayeva et al., 2022). After-school programs are leveraging technology to enable personalized learning, streamline administrative tasks, and equip students with vital digital skills (Gomes & Thomas, 2022). This chapter brings you the case study of the technological evolution of one such program called DREAMS which implements a transgenerational approach to empower adolescents.

Nurturing Adolescents: Empowering Growth and Development

Adolescence is a unique and crucial stage of life marked by physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth. During this time, adolescents are in the process of forming their identities, building relationships, and gaining independence from their families. It is a critical period that requires support from various sources, including family, school, and community (Christie & Viner, 2005).

Unfortunately, many adolescents face challenges during this stage of life due to diverse deprivations in psychosocial support systems. Adolescents may lack proper mentoring, care, encouragement, opportunities to develop and showcase their skills, and other resources that are essential for their well-being. In addition, adolescents may also face other issues such as peer pressure, bullying, social isolation, substance abuse, and mental health problems. These challenges can have a significant impact on their overall development and can lead to negative outcomes such as dropping out of school, delinquency, and poor physical and mental health (Domagała-Zyśk, 2006). It is essential to recognize the importance of supporting adolescents during this critical stage of life. By addressing the diverse needs of adolescents and providing them with opportunities to develop their skills and interests, we can help them build a strong foundation for their future success.

Even though schools play an important role in academic and socio-emotional development for most students, some may require additional assistance or opportunities in the form of multi-tiered systems of support (Mukherjee et al., 2023; Stodden et al., 2023). This is where the importance of after-school programs can be emphasized. Most of the after-school programs include activities focusing on academic enrichment, arts and culture, sports and physical fitness while some are designed to offer personal growth, community service, leadership and life skills development (Thomas, 2022). These programs offer guidance and support and are often executed by trained professionals or volunteers. Participation in after-school

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