



Internet Society

Trinidad and Tobago Chapter

The ISOC Trinidad and Tobago Chapter
Chapterthon 2020 Project

Crowdsourcing Teacher Education
in
Online Teaching and Learning

Submitted by:
Jacqueline Morris
Lauren Semper-Scott &
Cecilia Thomson

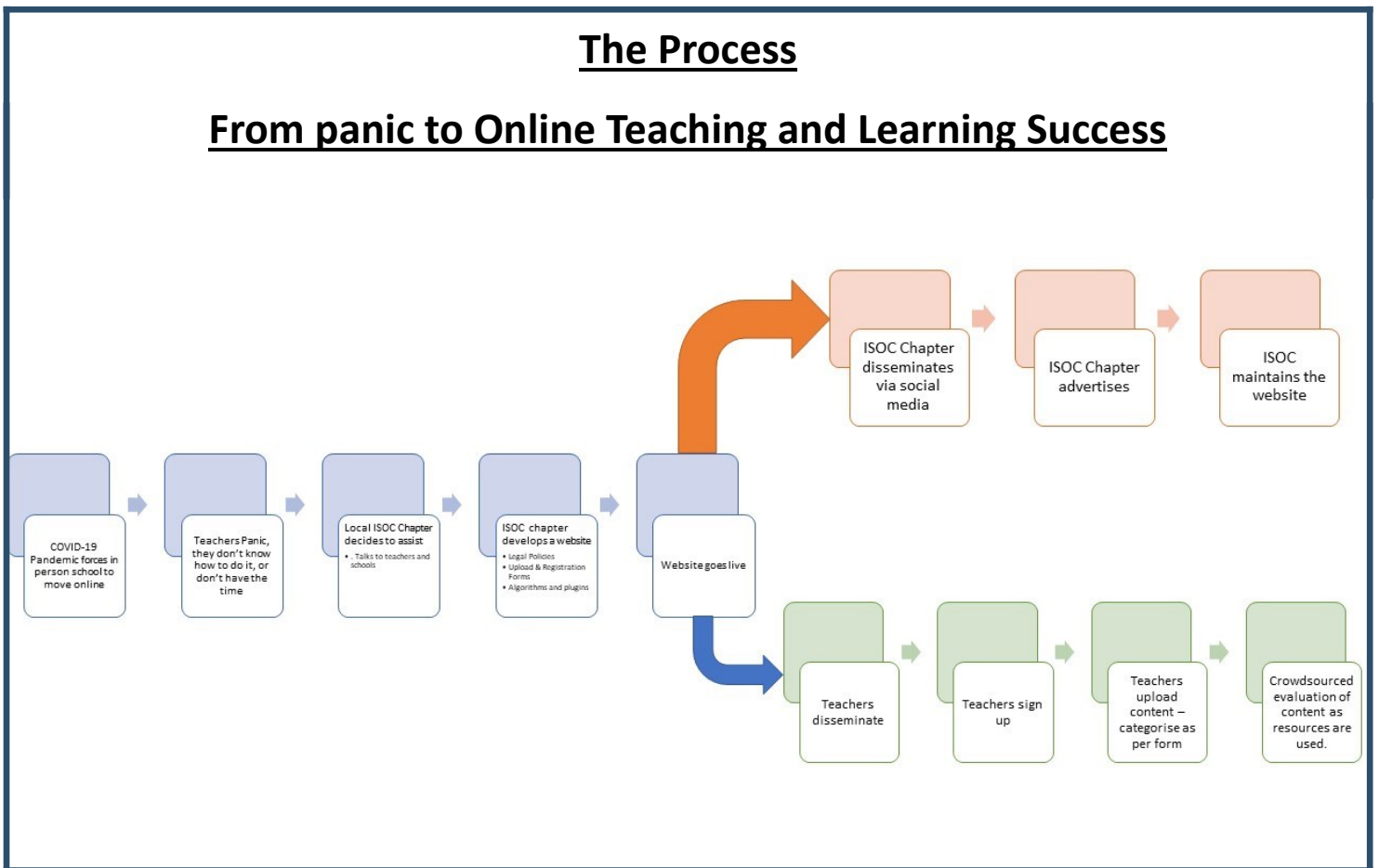
Crowdsourcing Teacher Education in Online Teaching

We are pleased to present our solution to pivoting to robust and pedagogically sound Online Teaching and Learning from the necessary, but hastily put together Emergency Remote Teaching.

Our solution mitigates panic and puts the education community on the pathway to success.

The Process

From panic to Online Teaching and Learning Success



A sample teacher recruitment flyer is included in the Appendix.

Summary

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago went into lockdown in early March of 2020. Schools were thrown into confusion as there were no plans, there were few teachers with skills to immediately pivot to online instruction, and there was general fear about the virus itself.

The timing of the lockdown was also a factor, impacting educators' responses. March is the time of year for major internal and external examinations at both the primary and secondary school levels. At the primary school level, ten- and eleven-year-olds were preparing for examinations to place them into secondary school. Regional examinations were scheduled for fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds and eighteen- to nineteen-year-olds at the secondary level. Postponement of examinations meant that interactions between student and teacher would serve any of the three major educational needs at that point in the academic calendar - :

1. Direct instruction – completing the remainder of syllabi
2. 'Maintenance Mode' – connecting meaningfully with students to avoid them forgetting content required for examinations (limiting learning loss) and
3. Assessment preparation – continuing examination preparation and anticipating possibilities of online assessments or changes in how examinations were conducted

The immediate responses were neither cohesive nor centralised. Teachers and teacher-educators organically reached out to each other. Those who knew more or created solutions out of need shared what they knew via webinars, ad-hoc tutoring sessions, and various shared documents.

As restrictions were eased and Trinidad and Tobago prepared to reopen schools – initially so that examinations could be conducted – the island was struck with a second wave of infections. Plans for September 2020 immediately took on a different tenor: in person instruction and blended classrooms have now been superseded by entirely online instruction.

Further, it is beginning to sink in with the population that this modality is not fleeting and may be with the population for some time to come. Teachers as teachers and teachers as parents now find themselves wrestling with an instructional landscape unfamiliar to many peers and students.

The problem

The problem, therefore, is as follows:

1. How, in a community where few are trained in online teaching and learning (OTL), do you ready teachers and teacher educators to meet needs that were created - with little notice - by the Covid-19 pandemic?

Speed is of the essence as any time lost will put students at an even greater disadvantage re loss of learning. Teachers can neither participate in traditional courses taught in the traditional manner, nor stop whatever teaching they are in fact doing to educate themselves.

2. How do we create an organic process that will realistically bring the majority of the 17,000 teachers in Trinidad and Tobago into a single network?

Once a structure is established to bring teachers and educators together, key to success will be attracting new participants and keeping them engaged. Growth should occur naturally within an easy to access, dynamic system.

The solution

Any solution to the need for instruction – of all stakeholders – teacher-educators, teachers, and students in the time of Covid-19 – must rely on the Internet. Training of instructors and the 250,000 students in Trinidad and Tobago (whatever the form it takes) must take place online; put simply it is Internet dependent.

It is clear therefore that the potential is there for teachers and teacher-educators to crowdsource instruction in OTL. This can be a robust solution providing valuable assistance to a system rife with stressors. A single, go-to platform offering real, workable solutions to problems created by the sudden shift to entirely online instruction can prove to be invaluable.

This can be done by creating a centralised portal where teachers can put all the information that they have to share, and other teachers can come to receive teaching, resources, and advice. Anyone can "donate" their ideas, their experiences, their knowledge, so that other teachers can benefit.

Participation would be more likely in this system as teachers are helping teachers. As solutions are offered, the community should grow and membership be maintained as relevancy and scope of topics expands.

The solution cont'd.

In addition to the community of learners created, as teachers access information in the same manner that they are expected to deliver instruction, they become learners with a greater appreciation for the needs and challenges experienced by their students. Experiences of low connectivity or unreliability of connectivity, device and platform vagaries are universal issues. This too provides teachers with the experience of limited reliable access to instruction.

The creation of a central repository for crowdsourced teaching and learning resources to support the intentional transition to online teaching, provided by teachers and teacher-educators who have the requisite skills, will support the national effort towards maintaining adequate education for children during the current pandemic.

Needs

There are two primary needs for this project: access to the Internet and devices capable of creating, adapting, sharing, and, where necessary, downloading material.

There are many/several ways in which to share resources and collaborate online free of charge. Therefore, the overarching project costs are primarily related to time: the time taken to create a platform and draw people toward the hub and the time each teacher takes to create and share a resource.

As there is no central office, the needs of the project are limited to those of the participants in crowdsourcing. Teachers and teacher-educators will have to be able to create or adapt resources, whether video, still images, slides, or written documents. In turn, they must be able to upload and share these resources, or read/listen, download, and utilize them. Devices used to achieve these goals can be as simple as smart phones.

Synthesis

This project represents a collaboration: the ISOC chapter joins teachers and teacher-educators in deriving a robust, free, or low-cost, solution to a very real problem. ISOC provides technical expertise in creating a platform that allows for sharing and creation of instructional resources, and educators in turn encourage sign up, creation, and sharing of resources.

Synthesis cont'd.

Benefitting from this approach are the teachers who are able to provide robust instruction, drawing on the community of practice that will be formed, and the students who will receive quality online learning to continue their education throughout the pandemic. However, parents and other stakeholders will also benefit from the continuing provision of quality education.

A community driven project, the teacher and teacher-educator communities, as well as other stakeholders, will maintain the platform created as a continuing community of practice. While local communities are the most obvious beneficiaries of this approach - provision of free and low-cost teaching and learning resources enabling instructors to properly teach online, a nation is the true winner as continuation of quality education is facilitated during the pandemic by the use of the Internet.

Conclusion

The Mission of ISOC states that “The Internet Society supports and promotes the development of the Internet as a global technical infrastructure, a resource to enrich people’s lives, and a force for good in society”. Any evaluation of this project should be viewed through this lens.

This project can be replicated in any country that has the same needs - free and low-cost crowdsourced resources and training for teachers to transition from in person teaching and learning to online teaching and learning.

This blueprint provides instructions for any group wishing to replicate it. While the solution presented fills teachers’ immediate needs, it can be used for other communities of practice. It is predicated on the use of the Internet, and also advocates for increased community access to the Internet.

Therefore, in its truest sense, in keeping with the stated mission and vision of ISOC, the project uses the Internet for the greater good and is for everyone.

APPENDIX



***A call to all educators to
join an online community
to share resources as we
navigate the challenges of
online instruction.***

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:
TEACHERS@ABC123TT.COM**