Learnings

Beginning in 2016, LEANLAB Education began experimenting with new ways to be inclusive of community voice throughout the innovation process. In 2017, we conducted our first listening tour, and published the results in attempting to align our K12 Fellowship recruitment efforts to the needs discovered in the listening tour. We also instituted a Community Investment Group—a representative committee comprised of a student, parent, teacher, administrator, philanthropist, and angel investor that evaluated the progress, impact, and “investability” of the team. By the end of the process, the committee selected two teams to receive additional $25,000 awards based on their progress. While symbolically aligned to community voice, we found that the structure itself was biased and favored teams that had built relationships with committee members or had more economically viable ventures, rather than focusing on student impact and future potential. Even more so, the nature of the committee structure gave power to representative voices, or delegates chosen to speak for specific communities (i.e. a Junior from one High School speaking on behalf of all students), instead of empowering the actual end users. Our goal is to launch a refined approach that augments our K12 Fellowship program with a true end-to-end, collaborative innovation model.

Evidence-Based Model

We’ve gained inspiration from participatory design models pioneered in 1970s Scandinavia¹, the co-creation model of Finnish education accelerator Xedu (the KYKY Living Lab handbook for co-creation by schools and companies)², the efficacy testing model created by LEAP Innovations³, and rapid-cycle evaluation models developed by Mathematica⁴ and the Department of Education’s Office of Education Technology⁵. Following the NSF, Institute of Education Sciences and DOE’s Common Guidelines for Education Research and Development, we’ve developed a Design Based Research framework that will test the usability of early education innovations designed in collaboration with schools.

Core Hypothesis

If those most impacted by education (parents, students, teachers, and administrators) are active participants and collaborators throughout the innovation process—from problem identification through launch—then education innovations will become usable faster, and ultimately will become more effective at improving student outcomes and become more commercially viable than those developed without direct user collaboration.

Key Questions

How do we better distribute power throughout the innovation process?
How do we create more usable innovations, faster?

PART I: Assessing the Community’s Needs and Vision for the Future

Needs Assessment: A needs assessment and listening tour was conducted among public schools in Kansas City, Missouri in the spring of 2018. Over 100 data points were sourced and revealed three priority areas for innovation:

1. Mental health and social/emotional learning support for students.
2. Advancing basic skills, especially in literacy.

PART II: Recruitment, K12 Fellowship, and Launch of Innovations into Active Beta Sites

National recruitment strategy launched to find the highest potential education entrepreneurs working to accelerate student outcomes in alignment with community needs.

Beta-site schools assist in selection and coaching of ventures and participate in collaborative approach to innovation. Fellows engage in three-month, rigorous K12 fellowship program, receiving coaching, capital and connections, while implementing immersive, collaborative beta tests.

PART III: Evaluation and Analysis

Beta-site schools will take part in a reflection debrief—evaluating and analyzing the overall impact of the fellowship experience. LEANLAB will then use this data to inform the collaborative innovation model¹ and program design for a multi-year program.

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