

Steven Vosloo

Edtech and innovation specialist. Global knowledge with on-the-ground experience

Personal details

South African | Born 1973 | No disability | Languages: English, Afrikaans
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Profile

What others say about me: *"Steve is one of those rare people who knows what it takes to bridge not just technological divides but social ones, consistently figuring out not just how to create new tools, but how to get people to use them in meaningful ways."*

Clay Shirky, author of *Here Comes Everybody* and *Cognitive Surplus*

- **ICT4D innovator, practitioner, researcher and policy developer** with 15 years of experience
- Specialist in **education technology and innovation, mobile learning, M4D** - always using technology for social impact
- **On-the-ground implementation experience** from a number of developing countries, as well as a **global research, strategy and policy perspective**
- Solid **programme design and management experience** – have fully **conceptualised, designed, budgeted and managed** many ICT4D projects, including resourcing, contracting and supervision of evaluation
- Practice principles of **user-centered design, agile software development and lean innovation** (certified product life cycle coach)
- **Strong people management skills** from leading local and internationally distributed teams
- Experienced in **partnership and stakeholder management** of international agencies, the media, high-level business, government and academia
- Solid **communications experience** through managing publications, global events and social media
- Excellent **writing and research skills**: authored many **reports and papers** in fields of specialisation
- Excellent **presentation skills** in large and high-level events, including **keynotes** at academic, UN and other popular conferences and panels
- Well **networked** in international mobile and education sectors, such as with UNHCR, UNICEF, Sesame Workshop, USAID, and many more
- **Mantra**: "Use the ICTs in the hands of people to enable their participation"

Higher education

- **Masters in Information Systems** *cum laude* – University of Cape Town (UCT), 2008
- **Bachelor of Commerce Honours** (Information Systems) *cum laude* – UCT, 2004
- **Postgraduate Diploma** (Information Systems) – UCT, 2003
- **National Diploma** (Information Technology) – Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, 1995

Awards, fellowships and research grants

- **Netexplo Award** for Yoza Cellphone Stories, 2013
- 21st Century Learning Fellow, **Shuttleworth Foundation**, 2007-11
- **Firelight Foundation** grant for Digital Hero Book Project, 2007-08
- **Shuttleworth Foundation** grant for research on digital storytelling by youth, 2006-2008
- Reuters Digital Vision Fellowship at **Stanford University**, 2006-2007

Employment history

Senior Project Officer, UNESCO, Paris

November 2016 – Present

UNESCO is the lead UN agency for education. At headquarters, I manage the [UNESCO-Pearson Initiative for Literacy: Improved Livelihoods in a Digital World](#), which studies how inclusive digital solutions can help people with low skills and low literacy use technology in a way that supports skills development and, ultimately, improves livelihoods. I lead the research, policy and guidelines development for the project. I am also a member of the Core Innovation Team at UNESCO and the organisation's focal point for the UN Innovation Network.

Key outputs include:

- Co-author a landscape review of digital solutions for low-skilled and low-literate people
- Co-author and produce [14 case studies](#) of inclusive digital solutions in the fields of health, agriculture, government, environmental practices, and displaced populations
- Co-author and produce UNESCO guidelines for developing inclusive digital solutions for low-skilled and low-literate youth and adults

Head of Mobile, Innovation Lab, Pearson South Africa

January 2014 – October 2016

Pearson South Africa is a critical Growth market for Pearson, one of the world's leading education companies. Traditionally an educational publisher, it is now transitioning into the online and mobile spaces through digital education services.

Responsibilities included:

- Driving research into the digital usage of learners and teachers, as well as the educational impact of digital products
- Leading the mobile learning strategy development and initiatives, based on agile development methodologies and ensuring a user- and mobile-first experience
- Product manager for key projects in South Africa, supporting global development teams
- Managing budgets, projects, teams and external software providers, all the while establishing best practices for continuous product development lifecycle improvement
- Communicating plans and project progress publicly and to internal stakeholders
- Growing the mobile focus of Pearson through partnerships, networking and presenting at international conferences

Achievements

- Certified Product Life Cycle coach, implementing agile software development and innovation principles in the company
- Developed the mobile learning strategy for Pearson South Africa
- South African Product Manager for Pearson global e-reader, delivered to 8,000 HE students, and Learning Management System, piloted in 3 Free State schools
- Product manager of [X-kit Achieve Mobile](#), Pearson South Africa's first schools mobile service, offering high school test and exam revision for learners with feature and smart phones. The content is fully curriculum-aligned, levelled for difficulty and based on a solid theoretical framework, while the service includes leaderboards, badges and social network integration
- Innovation Lab lead for the tablet implementation at CTI and MGI, two higher education institutions in South Africa owned by Pearson (the largest tablet rollout in the country)
- Strategic advisor to [Project Literacy](#), Pearson's 5-year global social impact campaign, launched in Sept 2014, that aims to support literacy develop in a mobile age

Senior Project Officer, Mobile Learning, UNESCO, Paris

November 2011 – December 2013

My role at headquarters was to establish and lead the organisation's mobile learning strategy, programmes, publications and events. The goal was to provide insight, policy guidelines and expert guidance to Member States on how to practically leverage mobile technologies to help achieve the Education for All goals.

Responsibilities included:

- Heading up the mobile learning team, managing specialists both at HQ and in the field
- Driving research and policy development on mobile learning and mobile usage
- Managing international mobile learning projects in the areas of policy, teacher development and mobiles for reading
- Developing new proposals, creating and managing budgets, contracting and managing consultants and partners, and overseeing monitoring and evaluation of projects
- Organizing mobile learning conferences, workshops and seminars
- Managing the programmes' communications strategy, including the publications plan
- Managing the partnership between UNESCO and Nokia from both a substantive and administrative perspective
- Representing UNESCO on the mEducation Alliance Executive Steering Committee

Achievements:

- Co-managed four Mobiles for Teacher Development projects in Nigeria, Senegal, Pakistan and Mexico
- Managed the Mobiles for Reading project, surveying users in seven developing countries on how mobiles are, and can be, used to support literacy development
- Publication of *UNESCO Working Paper Series on Mobile Learning*
 - Managed publication process, including high-level editing, of 14 papers that have been translated into multiple languages
 - Authored one of the 14 papers: *Mobile Learning and Policies: Key Issues to Consider*
 - World Bank blog review: "this series of papers is highly recommended reading"
- Publication of *UNESCO Policy Guidelines for Mobile Learning*
 - Led the development of, and co-authored, the guidelines
 - Managed a broad consultation process from experts, public and 20 Member States
- Contributed to the *Technology, Broadband and Education: Advancing the Education for All Agenda* report, coordinated by UNESCO for the UN Broadband Commission for Digital Development
- Successful hosting of Mobile Learning Week 2011 and 2013, including the Senior Education Policy Makers' Forum, attended by participants from 45 countries
- Member of the Advisory Board for the *Horizon Report > 2013 K-12 Edition*

Mobile Impact Evangelist and Manager of Cape Town office, mLab Southern Africa, Cape Town
March – October 2011

The mLab (mobile applications laboratory) Southern Africa (SA), supports innovation and entrepreneurship by incubating mobile apps and content in the Southern Africa region. The mLab SA is based in Pretoria with a satellite office in Cape Town. This initiative and mLab East Africa in Nairobi, were the first of a number of mLabs to be launched around the world, and are supported by *infoDev* (World Bank), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Finland, and Nokia.

Responsibilities included:

- Identifying, selecting and mentoring start-ups, as well as monitoring/evaluating their progress
- Setting the strategic direction for the growth of the mLab stakeholder community
- "Evangelising" the opportunity that appropriate and user-centred mobile apps offer for supporting education, health, finance, etc. in new ways, based on my M4D knowledge and experience
- Promoting the mLab and mobile development in Southern Africa by engaging local developers, entrepreneurs and institutions through events and outreach programmes, and by presenting at local and international conferences
- Developing deep and mutually supportive relationships with academic, training and research bodies, similar regional and international institutions, and industry stakeholders
- Developing resources on mobile app business models, sustainability, research, etc.
- Establishing and managing the Cape Town office
- Establish and maintaining the online presence of the mLab (e.g. website, knowledge base, blog, newsletters, Twitter, Facebook, etc.)

Fellow, 21st Century Learning, Shuttleworth Foundation, Cape Town

November 2007 – February 2011

Holding the prestigious Shuttleworth Foundation fellowship, my mandate was to conceptualise and lead innovative educational initiatives that use ICT and mobile technology to improve teaching and learning in the 21st century in South Africa.

Achievements:

- Founded *m4Lit* (mobiles for literacy), also known as *Yoza Cellphone Stories*, to support teen reading and writing using mobile phones. In first 18 months in South Africa and Kenya: 120,000 full story reads, 30,000 comments and 10,000 competition entries
- Fully conceptualised, designed and budgeted the project. Contracted and managed suppliers. Helped design the project evaluation and supervised the execution of that by the University of Cape Town
- m4Lit clearly demonstrated that mobile phones are a viable distribution channel for long form content and enabling user participation, not only in Japan where m-novels are popular but in Africa, which is “book poor” but “mobile phone rich”
- m4Lit won numerous local and international awards for innovation and received media coverage by the BBC and NPR – for more see m4lit.wordpress.com
- Wrote papers on digital games and learning, the effects of mobile texting on literacy and mother-tongue education
- Hosted networking workshops for digital games and learning in Johannesburg and Cape Town
- Led the teachable agents project: piloted Stanford University software at 5 schools in Cape Town to research teachable agents as effective teaching tools
- Judge of the Digital Media and Learning competition funded by the MacArthur Foundation
- Advisor to the Department of Basic Education on its Guidelines on e-Safety in Schools

Fellow, Reuters Digital Vision Programme, Stanford University, Palo Alto

September 2006 – October 2007

One-year fellowship programme in social entrepreneurship to incubate innovative projects that best utilise ICT for social change. Only 3% of global applicants are accepted onto the programme. Through seminars, mentoring and full immersion at Stanford University the programme taught participants how to apply Silicon Valley innovation, technology and entrepreneurship to ICT4D projects in developing countries.

My research project was the *Digital Hero Book*, which built upon a proven paper-based intervention to provide psychosocial support to young people. I used mobile phones, social networking and digital storytelling to create a digital approach to the hero book process, and in this way was able to, for the first time, connect low-income “hero bookers” from around the world. The participating youth and teachers were taught ICT skills and increased their cross-cultural awareness, demonstrating the power of digital to support youth voices for positive social change. The Reuters Foundation and the Shuttleworth Foundation funded the project, which included the development of a toolkit.

Design and Usability Team Leader, Centre for e-Innovation, Provincial Government of the Western Cape, Cape Town

September 2003 – September 2006

Mandate: To help establish Cape Gateway (capegateway.gov.za) as the single point of access for all government information and make it as relevant and usable as possible to the citizens of the Western Cape.

Achievements:

- Portal grew to 60,000 pages of information
- Awards for Cape Gateway: World Summit Awards – Special mention in the e-government category (2005) and Centre for Public Service Innovation: runner-up in the category “Innovative Enhancements on Internal Systems within Government” (2005)

Responsibilities included:

- Understanding citizen needs – information and usability needs – and creating a relevant and usable site
- Conducting usability reviews and briefing the software and content teams

- Writing full user and functional requirements specifications for the site
- Training and change management
- Researching, planning and strategising future versions of Cape Gateway
- Also played an advisory role within the Centre for e-Innovation:
 - Informed the work of the Presidential National Commission on Information Society and Development by, e.g. participating in workshops, reviewing draft e-strategy documents and writing papers on its work
 - Attended and presented at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005)
 - Advised on Cape Access, the provincial rural ICT-access project

Earlier work experience

From 1996 to 2003 worked in Johannesburg, London and Cape Town in various roles including web developer, project manager, team leader, usability and accessibility consultant, information architect, content author, strategist and researcher

- SA clients included: South African Airways, Volkswagen, Old Mutual and Western Cape Tourism Board
- UK clients included: The Guardian, Macmillan Publishing, British Telecom (BT), Royal Mail, Lloyds TSB, British Red Cross and Shell

Selected invited presentations and panels

A full list of presentations is available online at stevevosloo.com/presentations

- **UNESCO-Pearson Initiative: Digital Inclusion Landscape Review**
Presented at Online Educa Berlin. Berlin, Germany, 8 December 2017
- **eLearning Africa Conference Plenary Debate**
Invited to participate in the main debate of the conference on the relationship between Silicon Valley and African edtech. Republic of Mauritius, 29 September 2017
- **Digital Solutions for Migrants and Refugees**
Presented at UNESCO Mobile Learning Week. Paris, France, 21 March 2017
- **Harnessing ICTs for greater access to education for girls and women**
Presented at the *GW (Graduate Women International) Conference*. Cape Town, South Africa, 24 August 2016
- **ICT in education in South Africa**
Panelist at *Dialogue CSI Conference*. Johannesburg, South Africa, 24 May 2016
- **Innovation and quality: Two sides of the same coin?**
Panelist at *UNESCO Mobile Learning Week*. Virtual webinar, March 2016
- **Ensuring the learner is at the centre**
Presented at the *Digital Education Show Africa 2015*. Johannesburg, South Africa, 4 October 2015
- **It's not (only) about the ebook**
Presented at the *Footnote Summit 2015*. Johannesburg, South Africa, 30 July 2015
- **2 Case Studies at National Level: 1:1 Educational Computing Initiatives in South Africa**
Presented at the *8th Global Symposium on ICT in Education 2014*. Gyeongju, South Korea, 3 November 2014
- **Education design in a mobile era**
Presented at the *3rd International North South TVET ICT Conference*. Cape Town, South Africa, 12 September 2014
- **Mobile content, users and consumption**
Panelist at *Mobile Web Africa*. Johannesburg, South Africa, September 2014
- **Mobile learning is the future**
Speaker for mobile learning on the *Oxford Union Debate on mLearning*. September 2014
- **Emerging trends in education and mobile learning**
Panelist at *UNESCO Mobile Learning Week*. Paris, France, February 2014
- **UNESCO Policy Guidelines for Mobile Learning**
Presented at the *8th eLearning Africa conference*. Windhoek, Namibia, 30 May 2013
- **Skills and Education – Developing Nigeria's People Power**
Panelist at *Nigeria Summit*, hosted by The Economist. Lagos, Nigeria, 20 March 2013
- **Maximising the role of mobile in the lives and education of young people**
Panelist at the Ministerial Programme of the GSMA Mobile World Congress. Barcelona, Spain, 25 February 2013

- **Mobile Learning and Policy Implications (keynote)**
Presented at the *9th Intel Education Summit*. Stockholm, Sweden, 6 November 2012
- **The Power of Mobile to Educate, Support and Engage (keynote)**
Presented at the *International M-Libraries Conference 2012*. UK, 25 September 2012
- **m-Novels for Africa: Engaging Readers through Mobile Phones**
Presented at the *International Symposium: Mobile Phone and Creation*. Universite Paris 3-Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, France, 14 June 2012
- **Why Mobiles in Learning?**
Presented at the *2012 UNESCO & CoSN International Symposium on mLearning: Exploring the Power of Mobility to Transform Learning*. Washington DC, USA, 5 March 2012
- **Examples of Mobile Interventions: Applying Evidence to Practice**
Presented at the *m4Ed4Dev Symposium*. Washington DC, USA, 19 August 2011
- **People, Connectedness and Mobiles**
Presented at *TEDx Stellenbosch*. Stellenbosch, South Africa, 29 July 2011
- **The Yoza Project**
Presented at *M is for Mobile: Exploring Mobile Technology for Social Development (Sesame Workshop)*. Delhi, India, 1 March 2011
- **Digital Natives with a Cause? Thinkathon**
One of 40 young thought leaders from around the world exploring the concept of digital natives and online activism, invited by Hivos. The Hague, Netherlands, 6-8 December 2010
- **Education for All and mLearning**
Presented at *Nokia Open Innovation Africa Summit* (opening plenary). Naivasha, Kenya, 29 November 2010
- **Let's ban malls! Rethinking cellphones in education**
Presented at *NAPTOSA Principals Conference Gauteng*, 31 July 2009, Johannesburg
- **Mobile learning: South African examples**
Presented at the *Mobile Learning Institute Summit*. Lusaka, Zambia, 24-27 June 2009
- **Enabling access to participation**
Presented at the *5th Annual United Nations' Web4Dev Conference*. New York, USA, 11 February 2009
- **Digital storytelling for Africa: Case study of an international digital media project**
Presented at *eLearning Africa – 3rd Annual Conference on ICT for Development, Education and Training*. Accra, Ghana, 30 May 2008
- **Emerging Issues for Internet Governance**
Presented at the *United Nations' Internet Governance Forum (Youth Panel)*. Athens, Greece, 2 November 2006
- **Towards a Sustainable Development View of ICT-based Local Content in South Africa**
Presented at the *United Nations' World Summit on the Information Society*. Tunis, Tunisia, 17 November 2005

Selected presentations at scholarly meetings and seminars

- Vosloo, S. E., 2010. mLearning in Africa: Lessons from the m4Lit project. Presented at the *VII International Seminar Mobile Technologies for Learning and Development*. Barcelona, Spain, 6 October 2010
- Botha, A., Vosloo, S. E., Kuner, J. & van den Berg, M., 2008. Improving cross-cultural awareness and communication through mobile technologies. Presented at *mLearn 2008*. Telford, UK, 10 October 2008
- Vosloo, S. E., 2006. Multilingualism in a South African e-Government Portal. Presented at the *5th Conference on Human Computer Interaction in Southern Africa*. Cape Town, South Africa, 26 January 2006

Selected publications

A full list of publications is available online at stevevosloo.com/pubs

Journal publications

- Traxler, J. & Vosloo, S. E., 2014. Introduction: The prospects for mobile learning. *Prospects: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, 44(1), 13-28
- Botha, A., Vosloo, S. E., Kuner, J. & van den Berg, M., 2009. Improving cross-cultural awareness and communication through mobile technologies. *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning*, 1(2), p. 39-53

Book chapters

- Vosloo, S. E., 2014. Yoza Project : des histoires pour mobiles accessibles à tous. In L. Allard, L. Creton, R. Odin, eds. *Téléphone mobile et création*. Paris: Armand Colin/Recherches
- Vosloo, S. E., 2009. Access to educational materials. In A. Finlay, eds. *Global Information Society Watch 2009 Report*. Uruguay: Monocromo, p. 29-30
- Vosloo, S. E., 2005. Towards a Sustainable Development View of Local Content using ICTs in South Africa. In T. Willard, M. Andjelkovic, eds. *A Developing Connection: Bridging the Policy Gap between the Information Society and Sustainable Development*. Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development

Published papers

- Castillo, N. M. & Vosloo, S. E., 2017. *UNESCO-Pearson Initiative for Literacy: Case Studies*. UNESCO, Paris
- Vosloo, S. E., 2015. *Mobile Learning: Key Principles for Success*. Results for Development, Washington D.C.
- Vosloo, S. E., 2013. *Mobile Learning and Policies: Key Issues to Consider*. UNESCO, Paris (translated into French and Spanish)
- West, M. & Vosloo, S. E., 2013. *UNESCO Policy Guidelines for Mobile Learning*. UNESCO, Paris (translated into French, Spanish and Arabic)

Refereed conference proceedings

- Vosloo, S. E., Walton, M. & Deumert, A., 2009. m4Lit: A teen m-novel project in South Africa. In *Proceedings of mLearn 2009*. Orlando, USA, 26-30 October 2009
- Kuner, J. & Vosloo, S. E., 2007. Mobile Storytelling and Video Sharing for Inter-Cultural Communication: How Personal Expression Leads to Job Skills. In C. Steinfield, B. T. Pentland, M. Ackerman, N. Contractor, eds. *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Communities & Technologies*. Michigan, USA, 28-30 June 2007

Theses

- Vosloo, S. E., 2008. *A Habermasian-based Critical Discourse Analysis of the ICT Strategies of the Centre for e-Innovation, Provincial Government of the Western Cape*. Masters dissertation, University of Cape Town, South Africa
- Vosloo, S.E., 2004. *E-Government and the E-Readiness of Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape*. Honours thesis, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Unpublished papers and articles

- *Digital games and learning: A South African perspective* (2009)
- *The effects of texting on literacy: Modern scourge or opportunity?* (2009)

Other writings and contributions

- Weekly "[long reads](#)" [post](#) on key issues related to ICT4D
- Contributed to Vodafone's report [Connected Education](#) (2017)
- Education Southern Africa magazine: [Mobile learning: How to choose the best apps](#) (2015)
- Contributed to [Education and Skills 2.0: New Targets and Innovative Approaches](#) (2014), a short book released at the World Economic Forum in Davos
- Contributed to UNESCO's [Reading in the Mobile Era](#) report (2014), based on a project that I coordinated while at UNESCO
- Interviewed for UNICEF's report [Children, ICT and Development: Capturing the potential, meeting the challenges](#) (2014)
- Contributed to the [Technology, Broadband and Education: Advancing the Education for All Agenda](#) report (2013), coordinated by UNESCO for the UN Broadband Commission for Digital Development
- BBC Future: [The future of education in Africa is mobile](#) (2012)
- Numerous contributions to the Mail and Guardian newspaper, South Africa, and blog posts on Mail & Guardian's [Thoughtleader.co.za](#) and [Techleader.co.za](#) (both by invitation)

Board memberships

I am a board member of the [FunDza Literacy Trust](#), a South African non-profit organisation dedicated to improving literacy among teens and young adults.