

## GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

# Special Issue from the IADIS 2013 Mobile Learning Conference

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Welcome to the special edition of the *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning* devoted to papers from the 2013 IADIS Mobile Learning conference which was held in March 2013 in Lisbon. This conference series was inaugurated in 2005 and it is one of the longest standing annual international mobile learning conferences. The Lisbon edition was the 9<sup>th</sup> and received 116 submissions from 28 countries throughout Europe and every other continent. The conference theme was Free as Birds Learning in the Cloud.

The theme was aimed at drawing research which contributes to investigating mobile learning as a construct which is concerned with a society on the move and with how the physical, conceptual, societal and technical mobility of learners might support the acquisition of experience, knowledge, abilities and skills. It hoped to appeal to colleagues working towards creating understanding regarding the learning, instructional and technical affordance of mobile technologies. In so doing, their research has contributed to extend the design, investigation and articulation of paradigms relating to how

learners move physical locations, utilising several technologies and devices, interacting with various social networks, as they undergo a learning event.

The conference also intended to gather further evidence of research on learning principles particularly appropriate to mobile learning such as contextualisation, augmentation and collaboration. A further objective was to bring together examples of the use of more recent technologies such as ‘smarter’ phones, e-readers, tablets and applications like augmented reality. The call placed particular interest in attracting research addressing the challenges of evaluation and research methods in mobile learning. The advent of cloud computing and learning analytics offer potential for exploring innovative mobile learning experiences and alternative evaluation strategies which may, in turn, throw light onto what kind of learning happens on the move.

The topics of the conference included; learning analytics and mLearning, cloud computing and mLearning, pedagogical approaches, models and theories for mLearning, mLearning

in and across formal and informal settings, strategies and challenges for integrating mLearning in broader educational scenarios, user studies in mLearning, socio-cultural contexts and implications of mLearning, evaluation and assessment of mLearning, research methods, ethics and implementation of mLearning, and tools, technologies and platforms for mLearning, among others.

This special issue brings together five contributions which are revised and extended versions of papers presented at the conference. The first paper, entitled 'A Historical Materialist Analysis of the Debate in Swedish Print Media on Mobile Phones in School Settings' by Torbjörn Ott, provides a breath of fresh air in terms of the object of the research as well as the method of investigation. The work analyses the controversial debate on the use of mobile phones for teaching and learning in schools in the Swedish press. It does so by applying a historical materialist framework which is based on a Marxist viewpoint of society. After identifying three levels of the structure of society: forces of production; relations of production; and superstructures; and mapping these onto the context of mobile phones in schools, the author discusses the findings of the investigation. He concludes there are nine salient topics in the Swedish debate, including; the politicization of the issue of mobile phones in school, the road towards legislation, a school not built on scientific principles, divergent conceptions of use, and different cultures of learning.

The second paper by Jacek Walinski, 'Implementing Linguistic Landscape investigations with M-learning for Intercultural Competence Development,' is another example of a novel approach. The paper presents a study which utilises the Linguistic Landscape methodology to engage learners in a situated and connected exploration of the cultural reality of a given area. The learners collect linguistic data from a local area by taking pictures of signs with mobile phones and annotating them with their location and a short description. The data collected is subsequently mapped on a shared Google Map and generates a linguistic landscape. Although

location aware services were not utilised in this particular study, it is feasible to do so. The automated collection of such data in conjunction with appropriate learning analytics opens interesting investigative pathways.

The third paper, 'Mobile Learning in Secondary Education: Teachers' and Students' Perception and Acceptance of Tablet Computers,' is a contribution by Hannelore Montrieux, Cédric Courtois, Frederik De Grove, Annelies Raes, Tammy Schellens and Lieven De Marez. The paper reports on a longitudinal study. The Decomposed Theory of Planned Behaviour is used to investigate which are the main factors that explain teachers and learners' support of the use of tablets as a learning tool. In particular, the analysis focuses on the intrinsic values: attitudes; and extrinsic pressures: social norms. The single case study involved three waves of data collection, 83 teachers, 694 students and a simultaneous analysis of the perspectives of both cohorts of stakeholders. Interestingly, the findings highlight that while subjective norm did not play a role in the teachers' acceptance, it did on students'. The latter felt pushed by peers and parents to embrace the technology.

The fourth contribution is a study into the use of mobile technology to support teacher training in Sloyd education. Its title is "'Talking Tools": Sloyd Processes Become Multimodal Stories with Smartphone Documentation' and it is written by Annika Wiklund-Engblom, Kasper Hiltunen, Marlène Johansson, Juha Hartvik and Mia Porko-Hudd. The paper reports on a pilot conducted with 11 trainee teachers to test the Talking Tools (TT) application. TT supports microblogging and reporting of activities through text, images and video clips. When users make entries these are automatically saved in individual blogs chronologically. Furthermore, peers can share their blog entries and comment on them and the teacher can monitor the progress and provide feedback. Applying content analysis to the 478 entries in the blogs, the authors identified seven categories of entries. These included concurrent process notes, retrospective summary notes and emotional comments amongst others. The authors also noted that

incorrect procedures were reported through TT and this might diminish the informational value TT as a memory aim.

The final contribution of this issue is ‘Lingobee – Engaging Mobile Language Learners Through Crowd-Sourcing’ by Sobah Petersen, Emma Procter-Legg and Annamaria Cacchione. Lingobee is a crowd-sourced mobile app which is designed to help learners capture language elements they come across in their everyday lives. It enables the collection, annotation and sharing of learners contributions in an online repository. Three case studies with Erasmus students in Italy, England and Norway studying the national languages were conducted. The investigation was based on the premise that Lingobee, being a mobile technology, would be an ideal enabler for autonomous language learning. The initial analysis of the cases pointed to the lack of participation and this triggered greater teacher support and scaffolding in subsequent implementations. Thus, the authors conclude that when support and guidance is provided within a teacher-led context there is a positive impact on learner engagement and use of LingoBee.

The five papers in this special issue contribute to the field of mobile learning in distinct but equally important ways.

‘A Historical Materialist Analysis of the Debate in Swedish Print Media on Mobile Phones in School Settings’ and ‘Implementing Linguistic Landscape Investigations with M-learning for Intercultural Competence Development,’ provide innovative perspectives to articulate the phenomenon of mobile learning and offer alternative methodologies for investigation. The third paper, ‘Mobile Learning in Secondary Education: Teachers’ and Students’ Perception and Acceptance of Tablet Computers,’ offers a longitudinal study that concurrently examines teachers and students. Through the analysis of substantial empirical data the paper supports previous findings and indicates future paths to be researched. The last two papers, “‘Talking Tools’: Sloyd Processes Become Multimodal Stories with Smartphone Documentation’ and ‘Lingobee – Engaging Mobile Language Learners through Crowd-Sourcing,’ report on the ongoing efforts to understand how mobile technologies can be implemented in a meaningful manner to enrich and support the teaching and learning process and offer lessons learnt through pilots.

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