Chapter 17
Exploring Learner Identities through M-Learning: Learning across Regional and Knowledge Boundaries

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ABSTRACT
Learning is about making connections: connections from the known to the unknown through interactions and dialogue; connections between people’s ideas and identities. Participation in learning is informed by an understanding of participants’ connections to understanding of themselves and their membership of different groups. The engagement of disenfranchised learners is supported by the opportunities for learners to participate in learning experiences where their knowledge is valued and they are partners in co-producing knowledge and materials. Mobile technologies have considerable potential to support disenfranchised learners to participate in creating and defining a space where they belong in formal education settings. M-learning provides opportunities for learners and educators to be active agents in learning, share their own worlds and perspectives, and together create and recreate their understandings of the world and their own place within it. This chapter analyses a range of learning programmes that have utilised m-learning to engage disenfranchised learners in regional areas across Northern Australia. The author argues that m-learning is more than a tool to engage learners, it provides an insight into understanding how people learn and develop strong identities as learners. The discussion demonstrates the potential of m-learning to engage with ways of knowing and representing knowledge in ways that build strong connections to broad and diverse learning and knowledge societies.

INTRODUCTION
The development of m-learning pedagogy is informed by understanding its potential to engage learner identities, explore different forms of knowledge, engage learners in the co-production of knowledge and resources. The development of m-learning pedagogy has resulted in practices that also inform the construction of learning theoretical frameworks. Learning is about making connections:
connections from the known to the unknown through interactions and dialogue; connections between people’s ideas and identities; embodied through practice, collaboration, sharing, experiences, trial and error and relationships with fellow learners, experts, peers and others. Learners’ engagement is informed by their learner identity, an empowered learner identity supports learner engagement as it contributes to learners’ sense that they can negotiate their own learning participation, their knowledge is valued and they are partners in co-producing knowledge and materials. Powerful pedagogies implementation supports the development of social partnerships in learning that engage learning stakeholders and empower learners. The integration of mobile technologies, for example mobile phones and MP3 players, into a broad range of learning communities has been rapid and extensive, many of these communities have historically, had limited access to digital technologies for learning. The availability and flexibility of m-learning has been utilised to actively engage disenfranchised learners in meaningful learning experiences.

Mobile technologies have considerable potential to support disenfranchised learners to participate in creating and defining a space where they belong in formal education settings. Learners can access, capture, interpret, remix and present information about theirs and others worlds in multimedia formats. They can use their own devices to participate in the production and sharing of resources about their own lives without being restricted by extensive and expensive infrastructure. In short, mobile technologies have the potential to support learners to make connections about and through learning. This impact on infrastructure-poor or disengaged learners’ experiences of and participation in learning should not be underestimated.

This chapter examines some of the ways partners in learning (including learners, teachers, para-professional support staff) use m-learning to deepen learning experiences and engage disenfranchised learners. The vignettes provide examples of various m-learning uses in Northern Australian regional areas and provide a basis to discuss some of the key concepts in relation to active engagement in learning, learner identities and m-learning. In particular, the learning from the vignettes examine the ways m-learning can engage disenfranchised learners in regional areas and the identities represented and given voice through m-learning. The discussion includes the kinds of media that have been used effectively for learning and the ways educators can use m-learning to build bridges across knowledge and learning systems. Where the literature or the projects broadly focused on e-learning is made explicit. The analysis of the literature, projects and implication focuses on the contribution of m-learning to students’ learning.

**M-LEARNING**

M-learning uses a range of emerging technologies, consequently m-learning is continually being transformed as technology and its uses change. The uses of technology have developed with the technological advances and, as Kress and Pachler (2007) note, the incorporation of a range of devices into many peoples’ social and cultural practices. Consider the impact of changes in battery size, voice recognition, touch screens, digital photographs and being able to beam files on your use of use of mobile technologies. M-learning has been described in terms of the mobile devices and software used in learning, tools that are available for immediate interaction in educational settings without physical restrictions; tools that are personal and pervasive (Kukulska-Hulme 2005). That is not to say there are no physical restraints, consider impact of battery life or being out of range of telecommunication services. As mobile technology is further integrated into daily life, people’s expectations of their capacity to be available and fully functioning increases (or toler-