Chapter 13
Mobile Learning in Organizations: Lessons Learned from Two Case Studies

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ABSTRACT

M-learning has been tested and investigated in the last decade in different levels of education, from K12 to higher education. However, academic studies reporting concrete m-learning experiences in the corporate environment are still rare. Considering this gap of knowledge, this paper analyzes two cases of corporate m-learning using COMTEXT® (a Mobile Virtual Learning Environment – MVLE, developed by the authors). It discusses the different elements involved in m-learning practices in organizations, including: (1) ergonomic, technological and pedagogical affordances; (2) limitations of mobile and wireless technology use in corporate m-learning; (3) methodologies and learning tools that can be applied; (4) the intricacies between the different types of mobility involved in m-learning activities in a corporate environment.

INTRODUCTION

M-learning has been increasingly studied and experimented with in the past decade within educational settings, ranging from K12 to university activities, and several software programs and practices have been acknowledged (Barbosa et al., 2007, 2008; Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2009; Saccol et al., 2009; Sánchez et al., 2009; Sharples, 2000; Yin et al., 2010).

However, academic studies on corporate m-learning are still scarce. It is necessary to investigate the possibilities of m-learning in the
organizational context, since it is particularly suitable for mobile workers, who usually spend most of their time traveling, visiting, and wandering, i.e., sales people, field technicians, etc. We can also assume that, since competences are developed in situated action, m-learning can help the development of professionals through contextualized learning activities, supported by the use of mobile and wireless technologies. Whenever the employees lack the time to physically attend training during work hours, m-learning solutions can help to allow on-the-job, flexible training.

This paper analyses two concrete experiences of m-learning for training in one organization. Saccol et al. (2009) discussed the research theoretical background and the m-learning solution applied in the case studies (a mobile virtual learning environment called COMTEXT®, accessed via Pocket PCs). This paper focuses on showing the dynamics of the m-learning activities conducted and the lessons learned. In the next sections we present the research method, the two case studies and the research results.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory research. We have created a Mobile Virtual Learning Environment (MVLE) called COMTEXT® (an acronym for COMpetence in conTEXT), as a tool for testing concepts related to competence development and m-learning in organizations (Saccol et al., 2009). COMTEXT® is a web-based system designed to be accessed via mobile devices.

COMTEXT® was designed according to the process of competence management in a corporate environment (Lindgren, Henfridsson & Schultze, 2004; Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006; Berio & Harzallah, 2007) and has four modules (Figure 1). The first module is called Profile (as can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, the icons titles are in Portuguese) and can record and show the
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