Chapter 10
Advancing Collaboration between M-Learning Researchers and Practitioners through an Online Portal and Web 2.0 Technologies

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ABSTRACT

With growing interest in mobile learning to address the educational requirements of a generation of students who have grown up with digital technology, and given the widespread adoption of mobile devices by indigenous people and in developing countries, there is a need for improved practice and better theoretical understanding of m-learning. This could be achieved through a more accessible body of knowledge of m-learning principles, teaching strategies and case-studies. This paper proposes the establishment of an online portal to influence and support good m-learning practice. An m-learning portal, incorporating a range of online, Web 2.0 and mobile technologies, would foster collaboration between researchers and educators and inform emerging national and international approaches using mobile technologies at all levels of the education sector and across all disciplines.

INTRODUCTION

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, interest in m-learning – learning facilitated by mobile technologies – is emerging as the most important innovation in education (Guy, 2009; Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler, 2005). This has come about most obviously because of the availability of wireless technologies but also, in large measure, from a realization that there is a serious mismatch between traditional teaching methods and the current generation of learners. In addition, given
Advancing Collaboration between M-Learning Researchers and Practitioners through an Online Portal

the widespread adoption of mobile technologies in disadvantaged communities, m-learning can play a vital role in re-engaging the disengaged and narrowing economic disparity between the developed and developing world.

M-learning has the potential to depart significantly from traditional, didactic teaching pedagogies and also from the e-learning practices that grew out of them in the 1990s. Since e-learning systems are good at mass delivery of content, they tended to perpetuate the old transmission model of education (Martin & Webb, 2001). Figure 1 is a French drawing from 1910 which presciently foretells technology-supported teaching in the year 2000: students sit passively downloading information that has been “digitized” in the teacher’s book-mincer or “web server”. The lack of expression on the students’ faces indicates that little learning is happening. Today, inactive, didactic lectures, and their online equivalent, remain the dominant modes of instruction at university.

As a “disruptive” new technology mobile devices have an interesting potential to support new learning and teaching practices. By contrast with both classroom teaching and e-learning, m-learning can be “spontaneous, personal, informal, contextual, portable, ubiquitous (available everywhere) and pervasive” (Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler, 2005, p. 2). M-learning supports constructivist and experiential pedagogies, and lends itself to student-centred learning, where learners create new knowledge and content for themselves (Cochrane, 2006; Litchfield, Dyson, Wright, Pradhan, & Courtille, 2010).

In this paper we explore how the existing knowledge and experiences of researchers and practitioners might be leveraged to spread understanding of m-learning further. Despite growing

Figure 1. Educational technology in the year 2000, as viewed in France in 1910 (From http://www.paleofuture.com/blog/2007/9/10/french-prints-show-the-year-2000-1910.html)
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