Mobile Learning in the Context of Transformation

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This issue of the *International Journal for Mobile and Blended Learning* features the second tranche of papers from the 'Technology-Enhanced Learning in the Context of Technological, Societal and Cultural Transformation' workshop convened under the auspices of the London Mobile Learning Group (LMLG) (www.londonmobilelearning.net) as part of the Alpine Rendezvous in December 2009 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany.

Whereas Part 1 of the Special Issue inter alia focused on the impact of mobile devices on literacy – defined broadly –, Part 2 features three papers dealing with mobile devices in the context of the world of work. They are supplemented with one paper focusing on didactic considerations around the use of mobile devices for teaching and learning as well as a concluding paper which asks important questions about the sustainability in the context of the seeming normalization of mobile technologies in everyday life as well as the worlds of work and education.

Christoph Pimmer (Switzerland), Norbert Pachler (UK) and Graham Attwell (Wales) examine the theoretical underpinnings of work-based learning and mobile learning with a view to identifying commonalities across the two fields in order to establish a baseline for future conceptual work in, and empirical research into work-based mobile learning.

The theme of work-based mobile learning is examined further in a piece by Graham Attwell (Wales). With reference to the socio-cultural ecology of mobile learning of the LMLG, which he recently joined as associate together with Christoph Pimmer, Attwell discusses the conceptual development of a work-orientated mobile learning environment (WoMbLE). The paper is particularly concerned with the potential affordances of mobile devices for supporting developmental learning and informal learning in the workplace.

Ambjörn Naeve (Sweden) deals with opportunistic, i.e. unplanned or unexpected, collaboration in the mobile knowledge society. The paper argues that the characteristics of mobile devices promote opportunistic collaboration in a multitude of different ways and seeks to show how we can make use of Semantic Web techniques and the Knowledge Manifold information architecture to support opportunistic collaboration in work processes.

Theo Hug (Austria) offers his take on mobile learning — namely 'microlearning' — up for discussion. He views it as a relational crossover concept in the context of technological, societal and cultural transformation and sees it as foundational to mobile learning. In addition, Hug proposes some models intended to advance didactic thinking in the area.

The final paper in this special issue by John Traxler (UK), a veteran mobile learning researcher but also new associate of the LMLG, explores the issue of sustainability in mobile learning and the education system in the context of the sometimes subtle but nevertheless pervasive transformations of jobs, work and the economy, of our sense of time, space and place, of knowing and learning, and of community and identity.

In terms of outcomes of, and key messages from the workshop as well as the papers presented in this two-part Special Issue, it was concluded that debates about mobile learning require the right balance of theory and practice in order to avoid an unhelpful chasm developing between the research community and the policy and practitioner communities.

The importance of definitional clarity around key terminology, particular in the context of interdisciplinary work in an international context, was underlined: mobile learning was felt to deal with complex issues, which benefit from an interdisciplinary approach. Despite interdisciplinarity adding complexity and this complexity needing to be managed sensitively, there exists a need for richness in the conceptual foundations of mobile learning and there is arguably a need to challenge the seeming hegemony of education, psychology and computer science as the foundational disciplines of the mobile learning research community.

Overall the discussions during the workshop and in the papers presented here reiterated the need for a paradigm change in education to enable young people to deal with the implications of ongoing transformations.

We deliberately end this two-part Special Issue with a set of contentious assertions by John Traxler who concludes his piece by stating that the education system is 'broken' and that mobile learning is 'unsustainable'. In order not to be misunderstood: this is far from a defeatist position; rather, it is meant as an invitation to readers to engage in vigorous, interdisciplinary debate about the issues explored in this Special Issue.

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