Vignettes of Pedagogical Practices with iPads: Reinforcing Pedagogy, Not Transforming It

Noeline Wright, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

This paper describes vignettes of three different secondary school subject teachers’ practices as they work with iPads shared across three specific junior classes. The paper demonstrates that counter to the accepted doxa that mobile devices transform pedagogy, they actually help reinforce current practices. The vignettes, inspired by Wallace’s (2004) framework where she showcases teachers’ practices, illustrate emerging findings about individual teacher’s pedagogical practices as their classes use both wifi and iPads. The findings suggest that these pedagogical practices are not necessarily altered, let alone transformed, by the use of mobile devices for learning.

Keywords: Adaptive Help-Seeking, Digital Technologies, iPads, Mobile Devices, Pedagogical Design, Pedagogical Practice, Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

Kompf (2005) argued that information communication technologies provide alternative ways of knowing and accessing knowledge. This has, he suggested, altered how we decide on validity, how things are learned, and how learning is subsequently changed or mashed up into something new. This access to sources of knowledge on a scale previously unimaginable, also has potential impacts on how learning can happen in wifi-enabled classrooms. In a commissioned literature review (Wright, 2010), I argued that digital technologies had the potential to disrupt teachers’ practices and the cultural dynamics of classrooms. This was based on themes that were persistent in literature spanning 2004 to 2009. In that literature, educators using new digital technologies were experiencing changes in the dynamics of their classrooms. In the review however, I also wondered if the Hawthorne Effect (Sonnenfeld, 1985) was an unexplored factor, since most of the literature was centred on individuals experimenting in their own classrooms. Longitudinal studies or syntheses of literature were unsurprisingly (because of the newness of the field) absent.

Since then, the advent of mobile technologies such as smartphones, Chromebooks and tablets, has widened the options of cultural tools available for learning. Somekh’s (2007) suggestion that “cognition is shared not only
in the sense of generating knowledge and ideas through dialogue with others, but also in the skilful use of the affordances of available cultural tools” (p. 12) - and now in mobile-rich learning contexts - can still be applied. Since iPads, Chromebooks and robust wifi are recent phenomena in New Zealand schools, it is timely to examine how such cultural tools are being used by teachers in different subjects in secondary school subjects.

Until recently, teachers have used the Internet as a source of learning materials, student activities and new delivery mechanisms. At the same time, teachers have not always been taking advantage of how learning might be transformed through this almost ubiquitous access to information and new cultural tools. Wallace (2004) wrote that the Internet had the potential to improve teaching and learning, but that its promise was largely unrealised or elusive. She also argued that using the Internet as one of these cultural tools can both support and inhibit innovative teaching and learning. Much hinges, therefore, on the teacher.

Being a competent technology user is, Wallace says, “different from knowing how to teach effectively with technology” (2004, p. 449). Mishra and Koehler’s (2006) seminal TPACK model proposes that pedagogical content knowledge can be extended so teachers can develop technological pedagogical content knowledge through using these new cultural tools in their own classrooms, examining what happens in order to derive meaning about the impact on their learners. At the same time, such deliberate investigation leads to better understanding what improves outcomes for learners while increasing their own knowledge and expertise in knowing how to wisely incorporate mobile technologies in classrooms. This knowledge and expertise growth is threefold: pedagogical, discipline-oriented, and technological. All three must work together as closely as possible to teachers’ classroom practices if any transformation is to have any hope of longevity in terms of behaviours, beliefs and dispositions that might affect designing learning with digital tools (Timperley et al., 2007)

Wilson and Demetriou (2007), for example, argue that teachers’ learning can be “...shaped through a combination of reciprocity between the context of the particular school setting, and an individual teacher’s interest and disposition to learn about practice” (2007, p. 214). Burden’s (2012) thesis uses this definition to frame his examination of teachers’ learning about Web 2.0 technologies as they appropriate them for classrooms. However he also remarks that this may not be a deliberate thing; that this “...occurs tacitly or accidentally in an informal and emergent manner which is more difficult to predict, but equally important to recognise” (Burden, 2012, p. 38).

So what happens when teachers appropriate iPads in different subject areas? Do they change their pedagogy as well? As Wallace argued, “what is required is not a wide-ranging understanding of technology but, rather, specific knowledge of how this technology can be used with these students to accomplish this purpose” (2004, p. 450 - author’s italics). This is useful to remember, for the PISA report on digital technologies and their effects on reading proficiency, argues that there is “mounting evidence that mere exposure to technology is not sufficient for becoming a skilled user” (OECD, 2011, p. 37). I would also argue that it may not impinge on teachers’ pedagogical practices either, for there is a strong insinuation that teachers’ pedagogies require change. It also begs the question – what if teachers already exhibit co-constructive, inclusive, pedagogically sound practices? Should these necessarily change when mobile devices are included in the learning, or could these devices enhance already good practices?

Teachers routinely adapt a variety of cultural tools, including mobile digital ones, to suit specific pedagogical purposes and this requires us to understand more about teachers’ learning. The questions noted earlier, coupled with Wallace’s point prompted a small-scale study in a secondary school in a medium-sized city in New Zealand. The school decided to examine the impact of iPads on specific junior
Related Content

Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/gagne-nine-events-instruction/16729?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/gagne-nine-events-instruction/16729?camid=4v1a)

Web 2.0 Technology and Educational Leadership Communication
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/web-technology-educational-leadership-communication/58441?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/web-technology-educational-leadership-communication/58441?camid=4v1a)
Where Time Goes: The Role of Online Technology During Leisure Time Learning
[www.igi-global.com/article/time-goes-role-online-technology/65737?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/time-goes-role-online-technology/65737?camid=4v1a)

Online Interest Groups: Virtual Gathering Spaces to Promote Graduate Student Interaction
[www.igi-global.com/article/online-interest-groups/74174?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/online-interest-groups/74174?camid=4v1a)