mLearning and Creative Practices: a Public Challenge?

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ABSTRACT

The ethos of open sharing of experiences and user generated content enabled by Mobile social media can be problematic in some cases (politics, gender, minorities), and it is not fully understood within the creative and academic sector. Creative people, students, and lecturers can misconceive the value and issues around open and public access to their work online, which include: professionalism, Intellectual Property (IP), collaboration (Gayeski, 2002; Lonsdale, Baber, Sharples, & Arvanitis, 2003), peer esteem VS individualism, amateurism, and paranoia. Collectively the authors of this paper have accrued a wide portfolio of experiences in global educational collaboration and practice-based research and, in this position paper, they highlight some of the key ethical challenges that they have found need to be negotiated within global mobile social media education (Andrews, Dyson, Smyth, & Wallace, 2011) and mobile media production (i.e.: photography and video – Wishart & Green, 2010). In order to ground this reflective discussion, the authors use Heutagogy as the learning and teaching framework to guide the qualitative analysis of a specific case study which is built upon the scenario-based approach utilised by Andrews et al., (2013).

KEYWORDS
Co-creation, Creativity, Ethics, Ethos, Etiquette, Heutagogy, Online, Public Space, Mobile, Mobile Social Media, Ubiquity

INTRODUCTION

In 2011, within the Design & Creative Technologies (DCT) Faculty and in collaboration with the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CfLAT) at AUT University – New Zealand, was launched the MOBILE Community Of Practice (MOBCOP) which aims to enhance cross-fertilisation of ideas and pedagogy related to new technologies and mobile social media. MOBCOP engages at two levels: internal (interdepartmental, cross-schools and across faculties) as well as external (others national and international universities). In terms of international linkage, MOBCOP has been mainly supported by an active collaboration with a mobile media specialist from Salford University (UK), Helen Keegan. In 2013, amongst all the MOBCOP fellows, Helen Keegan, Dr Thomas Cochrane (CfLAT) and Laurent Antonczak (DCT) decided to start a specific creative collaboration called “MoCo360” which engages over two hundred fifty fellow students and teachers across the globe.

This position and reflection paper will first outline issues relating to ethics amongst the existing literature, then discuss and examine privacy within a creative environment by using one international project (#moco360). Following upon Moor’s question “what is special about computers” in order to understand what is ethically unique and the same question applies to Internet research (Moor 1985; Ess 34
& AoIR 2002; King 1996), this paper draws on the authors’ experience and knowledge in Pedagogy and Creativity and will not discuss any legal aspect, jurisprudence nor legislation in relation to ethics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online, the concepts of public and private are much more complex than in a traditional face-to-face situation. The increasing rise of the social web as well as the ubiquitous technologies open up issues around privacy, tracking via geolocation data, a potentially global audience for critique, and IP and copyrights questions, without mentioning the myriad legal complexities given jurisdictional differences in data laws. Furthermore, research that analyses the use of digital technology for learning from an individual perspective (Buckingham and Willet, forthcoming; Crook & Harrison, 2008; Sharples et al., 2009), and research on the how digital technologies can be used across different system for education (Vavoula et al., 2007), highlights new ethical issues also defined as “new species of generic moral problems” (Johnson, 1997, p. 61). Based on the principles of the work of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics and in anticipation of this chaotic situation, a general overview of ethics on the Internet was defined in 1989 by the Internet Architecture Board (IAB): the IAB made a few recommendations focussing mainly on: resources access (utilitarianism), users privacy (deontology) and fraud (consequentialism). However, due to the mobile affordances and proliferation within the last five years, it is more and more difficult to address the questions related to Informed Consent and Confidentiality, for instance. In fact, Ling and Donner (2009) well analysed the behaviour tension created by this fast increase, and more specifically within a creative environment, Winters (2006) argues that it is almost impossible to make the distinction between “tracking” VS “privacy”.

The authors argue that, because of this identified dilemma (Winters) and based on a substantial increase of Ethics Association since 2001, there is a recurring tension between the notion of “this is mine / this is my genius idea” VS “this is yours / I am ready to share” amongst the creative people, which requires a precise understanding of a foundation of trust, ethics and best practices in general. Furthermore, in “Supporting Practitioners in Implementing Mobile Learning and Overcoming Ethical Concerns: A Scenario Based Approach”, Andrews et al., demonstrate that teachers and academics competencies can be supported by four ethical scenarios. During #moco360 collaboration, “Scenario 4: Whose Content is it?” and “Scenario 2: Where do You Stop?” were mainly and unconsciously used by participants.

Within this reflection paper, the authors position is that Mobile Social Media provides a powerful platform for student determined learning, enabling the use of the devices the students own as content creation and sharing tools bridging both formal and informal learning experiences. Thus, the essential benefits of mobile technology compared to any other digital devices is that students, participants, are constantly connected thanks to an artefact which fits in their pocket, so that they can immediately and spontaneously express and share their creative ideas and well as experiencing learning seamlessly and informally. However, in contrast to the myth of the ‘Digital Native’ and the ubiquity of Facebook use, it seems that University students’ digital identities are predominantly social with their online activity and define themselves as social media consumers rather than producers. Following upon Buckingham (2006) argument that young people have already successfully integrated digital engagement into their social routines, students need to develop critical skills to effectively use and choose Mobile Social Media, rather than creating closed ‘safe’ environments that shelter students from authentic experiences. Within a global economy students need to learn new digital literacy skills to prepare them to become active participants of any professional and borderless networks, to become prosumers.
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