Chapter 8

Culture and Context Impact on Mobile Tech Application in Organizational Learning: Case Study of UK Higher Education Institution and Chinese State-Owned Enterprise

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ABSTRACT

While the significance of mobile technologies to support deep learning has been recognized, the impact factors of applying these technologies into various organizational learning environments still remain poorly understood. This chapter has explored the community of inquiry (CoI) framework as the lens to understand culture and context impact on mobile technology application to facilitate learners’ engagement and educational experiences. Two sharp-contrast case studies are selected to provide the practical insight of the research. Results infer that usage of mobile technology has a positive impact on organizational learning, which leads to greater learning engagement as long as culture and context are considered as key issues to select appropriate mobile technologies. These factors decide the mobile native functions, delivery platforms, and provided learning contents, which are key elements in the proposed CoI framework in the context of m-learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Mobile technology is becoming increasingly pervasive and has spread at a rapid pace over the past few years. The concept of using mobile technologies in learning has been known to facilitate learning processes, collaboration and sharing among learners. Mobile learning (M-learning) is therefore defined as the use of portable mobile devices with the Internet in the learning process (Anohah et al., 2017; Crompton & Burke, 2018). Since this form of learning is accessible through a mobile device by anyone, anywhere and anytime, it provides an opportunity for a lifelong and continuous learning without limitation of time and context (Nagella & Govindarajulu, 2009). Research shows that M-learning is a trend of mobile technology usage and it can support learners in many ways; with functionality ranging from the simple use of SMS texting, providing private availability of on-demand study support to the more advanced use of mobile and smartphones for pedagogy. However, the literacy gaps between M-learning technologies and organisational issue associated with technological application in different learning contexts provide challenges to adoption of this trend. There are a few literature reviews providing the theoretical frameworks to bridge the gap, such as Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison et al., 2000) for blended learning. The framework emphasizes social, cognitive and teaching presences when combining face-to-face and online learning. It argues that by finding the appropriate balance between the three presences, students’ engagement could be fostered by empowering them to become active learners and producers of knowledge, rather than just passive consumers of information. However, the usage of this framework is mostly focused in Higher Education instead of other organisational learning environment.

This chapter aims to undertake comparative case study to address the challenge and fill the gap described above by investigating two sharp-contrasted learning environments, i.e. Higher Education institution (HEI) in the UK and State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) in China, through the lens of CoI framework. The following two questions were addressed by the research:

- What are the implications for the implementation of a stable community of inquiry in the M-learning context? (by theoretical research)
- How will culture and context impact on the mobile technology application in organisational learning? (by practical research)

In this chapter, ‘Background’ section will focus on M-learning and CoI framework, together with discussion on different aspects of CoI framework in the context of M-learning. This review will lead to the discussion on how mobile technologies have been used in UK HEIs and China SOEs to encourage successful establishment of community of inquiry. Practical research is followed after literature review in ‘Comparative Case Study’ section to discuss mobile technologies used in Salford Business School in the UK and China Unicom in China. The two case studies will be compared in terms of characteristics of learner groups, motivation mechanism of their learning journey, mobile functions, contents and learning culture to inform the culture and context impact on mobile technology utilisation in organisational learning. The discussion will be summarised and good practice framework will be proposed in ‘Solutions and Recommendations’ section. The chapter will be concluded in final section based on both theoretical and practical research discussed in previous sections. Limitation of this research will be addressed and recommendation for future research will be proposed as well.