

Chapter Summary:  
Chapter 10 MobilED

This chapter covered the concept of using mobile technologies to conduct formal and informal learning within a distance education scope. The main mobile technology covered is the use of mobile and cellular phones as an educational tool in and out the classroom. The chapter point out the prevalence of mobile devices in developing and third world countries. Mobile phones are used more in these types of countries than computers and other Internet ready based equipment. It is even stated that students has access to mobile technology more than they it for pencils, paper, and books. It is also pointed out that phones are more like computers or terminals that you can talk, send and receive SMS messages, share data, search the internet, and collaborate with others across countries and continents that span hundreds and thousands of miles.

Pilot programs were conducted for MobilED in South Africa, India, and Brazil with South Africa being the main research and testing area. They also choose Finland for the developed country site to test the project. Since mobile phones are usually ban from use in school, this is a major change in the philosophy and usage of mobile technology in a school environment. The article points out that phones are used in an informal learning context all the time outside the classroom. They want to show how your can used them to build collaborative environments that promote learning and the acquisition of knowledge in and out of the classroom.

The major objective of the project were to do the following:

- Explore and comprehend the social, cultural, and organization of students in and out of school in developing and developed countries.
- Develop teaching and learning tools for mobile technology
- Develop concepts, prototypes, and platforms that will support a mobile technology environment
- Test and evaluate the above ideas and platforms in the stated four countries.

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Some of the technology used to create this learning environment is found in the following items:

- Mobile devices and networks
- Wikipedia and other wiki sites
- Social Software like blogs
- Open Source language, audio, and speech interfaces
- Open Source telephone and software platforms

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The study ran three pilot studies with students in different economic and social backgrounds. Students and teachers were challenged to collaborate with each other using voice and messaging as well create podcast, slideshows, and other presentation of the material they were to cover in the exercise. Server logs showed they were really into using the technology as well as one group using to research for material on other school projects. The use of an audio-wikipedia was also a used heavily as access to paper and electronic based information is limited.

The development of a strategy on how to use mobile technology is a key to the success of this type of learning environment. This includes creating awareness and value to the project, provide time to adjust and identify strong and weak points, and finding strong mentors to coach and keep everyone excited about the program to make it sustainable in the future.

There were some concerns and factors to consider with this type of distance learning scenario. One of the major ones was how to monitor what students were doing and searching for with the mobile phones. There is no real easy way to do this and the group concluded the best way to handle this was the teaching the values of good cyber citizenship to their students. The sustainability and cost of a program like list was also an issue. Being able to afford the data and cellular plans as well as the cost of the phones to run a program like this has to be considered. I think the group stressed the use of Open Source programs and technology to lower the cost and provide a wide variety of options for this type of distance learning.

In conclusion, I think this type of learning a real potential in not only developing but also any country in the world. This allows students who really can't collaborate or ideas with others outside their area to really get a global education. We can reach learners from different backgrounds and experience using and expanding our current mobile infrastructure. . This allows us to become a world-learning center where data and ideas span horizons instead of only classrooms.

#### References:

*Mohamed Ally. © 2009 Mohamed Ally. Published by AU Press, Athabasca University. Mobile Learning Transforming the Delivery of Education and Training*

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