

Mobiles for Development: a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)
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Introduction to Mobile Learning

In this video, you will be introduced to the concept of mobile learning, often referred to as m-learning. What is m-learning? How is it defined? You will also learn about the range of purposes for which mobile learning is used. Finally you will learn about examples of successful mobile learning projects in different parts of the world.

Learning objectives

Insert slide on learning objectives

By the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

- i. Define mobile learning
- ii. State the purposes for which mobile learning is used
- iii. Give examples of mobile learning projects in different parts of the world

Mobile Learning is the use of mobile devices such as mobile phones, tablet computers, e-readers, iPads etc either alone or in combination with other technologies in order to promote learning, anywhere and anytime. Mobile devices are digital, portable, can be used to access the internet and can perform a variety of tasks.

The ownership and use of mobile devices, particularly mobile phones are widespread in both developed and developing countries.

Insert Slide on Mobile subscriptions

According to the International Telecommunications Report, 2012, mobile cellular subscription in developing countries has grown steadily from a mere 7.9% in 2001 to 78.8% by 2011 in a period of only 10 years! Developing countries constitute the fastest growing market for mobile phones and based on current trends in mobile phone ownership will, surpass the developed world by 2020.

Thus of all the mobile devices, the mobile phone seems to be the most promising one for Africa and the rest of the developing world. This is mainly because the mobile penetration rate is very high: mobile subscription was about 561 million (53.5%) by 2012.

Some of the questions educators and education policy makers often ask about mobile technologies include:

- i. What are the educational uses of mobile devices?
- ii. Are there examples or best practices of the use of mobile devices for teaching and learning?
- iii. Which are the subjects that can be taught using mobile devices?

Insert Slide containing the 3 questions

Mobile technologies are used in education for a wide variety of purposes. The range of purposes for which mobile devices are used include:

Insert two slides on the purposes.

- Program administration: SMS text messages are used to provide information of an administrative nature and to engender a greater sense of belonging among students;
- monitoring student progress and being proactive to encourage students and support retention
- provision of learner support
- the delivery of course content
- teaching school subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences . and languages
- organizing and delivering quizzes and games designed to enhance learning
- organizing context specific activities (e.g. museum visits) and as a tool to enhance classroom learning
- whole course delivery including assessment and accreditation
- provision of work-based and just-in time learning

Learners and teachers in all parts of the developed and developing world use mobile devices such as mobile phones, IPADS, tablet computers etc to access

learning and teaching materials, discuss and share information with other learners, or teachers, and or teacher educators and engage in collaborative activities.

Examples of the uses of M-Learning

Insert slide on examples of mobile learning projects

There are good examples of the uses of mobile learning in developed and developing countries aimed at promoting access to education, educational equity and quality.

Let us take a brief look at three of the examples.

The M-Learning project in the United Kingdom

The M-Learning project in the United Kingdom was implemented in 2001-2004 in order to help young adults (16-24 years old) who dropped out of school or school failures to engage in relevant and collaborative learning in non-formal learning environments. The mobile devices were used not only to deliver content to the learners but also to facilitate effective communication, collaborative work and communication in the learning process.

English In action: “Trainer in the pocket”, Bangladesh

English in Action (EIA) is a nine-year programme which will provide professional development to 75,000 teachers by 2017. The ‘trainer in your pocket’ is one of the mobile devices used to provide teachers with the professional development opportunity and thereby promote the goals of the English in Action project in Bangladesh. It is a project that is being funded by the DFID, Britain.

The ‘trainer in your pocket’ is a mobile device (iPod in the programme’s pilot phase; currently a low-cost mobile phone) which contains a range of teacher professional development materials (video and audio) which can be easily accessed by teachers anywhere and at any time.

In addition to teacher professional development materials, these devices included a suite of audio resources for teachers to use in the classroom to support the national course textbook. Teachers were also supplied with a portable, rechargeable speaker. The ‘trainer in your pocket’ set of professional development resources to support primary teachers’ own learning included 18 video clips and 4 audio

recordings that exemplified a range of correct and incorrect English communicative language teaching (CLT) classroom practices. It is intended for teachers to use on their own.

The MoMath Project in South Africa

The MoMath project is a collaborative effort by the South African Department of Education and Nokia. It commenced in 2007 and uses mobile phones to deliver mathematics content and support to Grade 10 students. The Maths content delivered through mobile phones is based on the country's national curriculum approved by the Department of education. The local mobile network operators provide free access to the learning materials. Students are able to access the materials, answer test questions, do exercises, participate in competitions and receive reminders about their assignments through text messages. As at 2011, MoMath had 25,000 learners, 500 teachers and 172 schools in 4 provinces. The findings of the evaluation of the project indicated that the students' competency in mathematics increased by 14%.

There are many other examples of successful projects that use m-learning to improve the quality of education and or broaden access to quality education for all social groups, particularly marginalised groups, as articulated in the Education For All (EFA) goals and the MDG goals. Mobile devices constitute affordable media for extending educational opportunities to learners- particularly marginalised groups-who do not have access to schooling. Mobile learning can be used to promote equality of educational opportunity among people living in remote areas or nomadic communities whose mode of life makes it very difficult for them to benefit from existing educational provisions.

This introductory video has focussed on what is meant by mobile learning, the purposes for which it is used and gave examples of successful mobile learning initiatives in different parts of the world. These will be explored in greater detail in the course.

Thank you.