



Mark Owens



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Role of Technology in Educational Change

In this article, the concept of education is being observed. From the view of technology and how the educational process was changed by technology.

Education is the most powerful weapon that can be used to change this world. Reflecting on this wise slogan that is attributed to legendary Nelson Mandela, one will no doubt hold a belief that without education the world would be nothing but gauche. Life in such a condition would be meaningless and dreary. It is imperative to acknowledge that the level of development witnessed in the world today is because of education. The average level that people of a certain country have attained education often determines their progress in all aspects of life: politically, socially, and even economically. Evidence can be drawn from all developed nations where literacy levels are exceedingly higher as compared to developing countries, which are still grappling with the burden of illiteracy. This then means that the secret for fast and sustainable development is education and people should not hesitate to invest dearly in it. The society can only value and recognise people if they have required academic qualifications and necessary skills, which they can use to perform various responsibilities. Without them, they will only be a liability and a motley lot to those who have acquired education. Different people have dissimilar reasons and/or excuses that would have enabled or prevented them from accessing required standards of education. These numerous reasons collectively form disparities that exist in the society in terms of individual and communal development. The current political, social, and economic situation warrants that every individual must be literate to cope with dynamic global challenges, which are posed by the advancement in technology. This technology has also incredibly revitalised education, making it an easier and thrilling venture, unlike in the old days when many people, especially from third world countries, would view it as a superfluous burden. This paper focuses on M-learning as an aspect of educational technology. In this respect, the paper explores different methods of M-learning and values of M-learning. In addition, the paper examines challenges facing M-learning.

Different Approaches to M-Learning

M-learning or mobile learning refers to a system of learning that takes place through multiple contexts, social as well as content interactions, with the help of personal electronic devices such as handheld computer systems, notebooks, e-books, mobile phones, MP3 players, and tablets. M-learning pays much attention to the mobility of a learner and versatility of technological gadgets in facilitating learning. It has made it possible for traditional classroom learning to break the walls for pupils and students to continue with studies away from the school environment as long as they can find mobile signals.

The new mobile technology has played a huge role in helping to redefine how information is received by people. Ongoing advances in this technology are rapidly shifting the preliminary purpose of mobile technology devices from merely making and receiving calls to retrieving the latest information concerning any topic or subject. A number of agencies comprising the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Intelligence community, Department of Defense (DoD), and law enforcement utilise mobile technology for information management.

Mobile learning can be applicable in a number of situations such as classroom, podcasting, artwork, self-learning, and through assorted applications. Classroom application of M-learning combines the use of handheld computers, smartphones, and personal digital assistants (PDAs) among others. Learners can collaboratively use these technological gadgets to enhance their research work, communicate with various resource centres, as well as making interactive displays and video features.

Through this application, teachers and learners would have been spared the trouble of scavenging for cumbersome resources such as textbooks, teaching and learning materials, and realia among others. Learners will also have the privilege of engaging with and manipulating information in a manner that can suit their preference and objectives. Using Wi-Fi-compliant mobile devices, teachers and learners will also access information from the internet instantly whenever there is demand. Finally, unlimited access to classroom activities and information on mobile devices gives learners a wide continuum to learning

anywhere, be it in class or outside.

Furthermore, a mobile phone can be a necessary device, especially for students who undertake distance education or those who oblige them to be mobile. Using the Short Messaging Service (SMS), they can send and receive information regarding availability of assignments, exam results, lesson and exam schedules, as well as change in venues. This would really save the time and the trouble of having to travel to a place of notice boards in order to catch a glimpse of the timetable and other important notices.

Finally, mobile devices help in facilitating online interaction between teachers, instructors, and their students or among students themselves. This form of blended learning shifts the classroom out of a traditionally dubbed brick-and-mortar setting by allowing teachers and students to become a part of the virtual society used for communication and collaboration. It customises learning to an interactive web platform, making it a thrilling experience for learners.

The second application is podcasting, which literally means listening to audio recordings of various lessons and lectures on smartphones or MP3 devices. This can be suitable, especially for reviewing live lectures and presenting learners with an ample opportunity for rehearsing oral presentations. Learners can also locate and play supplemental information on the same topic to enhance internalisation of concepts in a particular lecture. It has been noted that university students who download and play lectures on podcast achieve higher grades during an exam as compared to fellows who attend lectures and tutorials in person.

Another application of M-learning is at workplace where employees can learn on job, usually at the point of need. This form of learning can be adopted in a range of ways, especially for a staff member who accesses a form of training on a mobile phone like just-in-time form of training where an employee undertakes a course intended to solve a small problem or simply gain a certain update. It can also be suitable for performance support where workers can have immediate access to tools in order to streamline a certain task at a workplace. Finally, M-learning can best be used as reference guides, e-books, as well as checklists. Coupled with this is the fact that self-service learning by the use of mobile devices has recently become more common at workplaces than in learning institutions because of very diverse training needs across large organisations. Companies have made an inundating adoption of mobile use as an effective way of communicating with a number of employees in an easy and effective manner.

Lifelong learning and self-learning are another application of M-learning. The most popular programme that has dominated this application is the Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) through which people can learn language skills on handheld computer systems, cell phones, and even through podcast method. This allows improvement in the levels of literacy, numeracy, and active participation of people of all ages in educational matters. Similarly, through the use of communication functionalities on cell phone, people can send or retrieve media or texts to and from a central portfolio, as well as export files from a learning platform to their respective phones. Finally, lifelong learning has been hailed as a suitable way through which young adults can develop workforce skills and show readiness for employment other than sitting idle at home as they wait to be recruited into particular jobs.

Values and Benefits of M-Learning

Teachers and learners who have adopted M-learning techniques and programmes are proud of having made numerous values and reaped several benefits, which are totally unique as compared to the classroom tradition of teaching and learning. First, they have noted the utmost importance of bringing new technology into the classroom so that teachers as well as students can learn to work with it as they advance in their education. This is a very good approach for introducing and exposing learners to a practical technology, which they anticipate to meet in their advanced levels. They also develop innovative skills, which they use to contrive programmes and projects that they use to discover and cultivate their inherent talents.

Besides, devices used in M-learning programmes are lightweight and therefore convenient to carry as compared to textbooks and other learning materials that have been used in traditional classrooms since time immemorial. In line with that, as compared with libraries and laboratories, these devices consume little space, yet they carry a lot of information. In fact, a handheld computer has the capacity to accommodate all information contained in a standard library should it be converted into soft copies.

Similarly, through Mobile learning, students can diversify types of activities to be learnt since all information can be available unlike in normal classroom situations where a certain school may not offer certain disciplines giving excuses like the lack of personnel or equipment. The system can also be used by learners with special needs as an add-on tool for re-engaging disaffected youth.

Despite that, M-learning has been highly prevalent in learning institutions due to their lean cost as compared to the exorbitant cost of desktop and laptop computers through which e-learning programmes take place. This factor has cut down the cost of learning and training drastically because learners do not have to invest in complex and expensive equipment anymore. Furthermore, mobile devices have proved to be easier to operate because they have simpler programmes with simpler options and commands as compared to other interface computers and laptops.

Moreover, M-learning devices contain multimedia content delivery and recreation options, which learners can use to have recreation and practice their innovative skills. At the same time, it is a potentially more rewarding experience of learning where learners enjoy a wide range of audio and visual 3D illustrations of natural sites, physical features, animated biological, geographical, and chemical processes, maps and statistical information, mathematical examples, and assorted mind-provoking game activities among others. All these aspects are compacted in one piece and are accessed from one's comfort zone without having to traverse landscapes in search of these resources.

Furthermore, through the application of podcasting, learners have numerous advantages. In case a learner has never understood the lesson or could not get along well with the teacher, he or she can revisit the lesson or lecture at a convenient time to understand lost concepts. Besides, those students who may be absent from a lecture, tutorial, or lesson due to some reasons such as absenteeism, sickness, staying away due to the lack of school fees, and alike may not be inconvenienced at all for they can always download sessions that they have missed and then catch up with the rest of students. Similarly, classes that are inconvenient due to the shortage of absenteeism of teachers can access lectures or lessons from other sources and then continue with syllabus coverage without any inconveniences.

Finally, unlike traditional classroom learning, which is teacher-centred, the programme of M-learning is learner-centred such that the learner has the ultimate liberty to decide what to learn, where to learn, and when to learn it. In case a learner falls sick and is probably admitted in hospital, learning can still take place even in the ward. Similarly, those who have been imprisoned before completing their studies can also proceed with their studies without any worry for the lack of a teacher of school. While on holiday, students can still spare time to cover some topics in the syllabus even in picnic sites. This means that through this programme coverage of any learning curriculum or course work can be very swift because the content is at the learners' disposal unlike when they depend heavily on teachers and lecturers for direction.

Challenges Facing M-Learning

Despite numerous benefits relating to the technology of mobile learning, there are a number of shortcomings, which may cause some inconveniences to the smooth running of the programme. Connectivity and lifespan of mobile device batteries can sometimes become a problem. Given the heavy task that devices will be associated with throughout the learning process, it is probable that batteries may not suffice through the lectures. This will force learners to keep interrupting their lesson as they look for alternative sources of power.

Besides, some gadgets may have a limited capacity to support certain files, which may render them dysfunctional and irrelevant. In line with that, most software content may be encrypted due to security and copyright issues. This will bar learners from accessing required information. Furthermore, this programme is simply a reworking of the existing system of E-learning, which is yet to be adopted by all learning institutions. The emergence of this system has brought a lot of confusion as people do not know whether they should continue with this one or adopt the former.

Socially, the challenge of M-learning may be related to the question of how to access and evaluate learning outside classroom, which may cause many issues, especially with respect to class control. Besides, this programme can be a good leeway through which learners can access unauthorised sites such as pornographic and recreational sites and digress from main subjects. Similarly, learning can turn into a mere adventure, especially when learners are expected to learn on their own. In case they come across confounding topics, they may give up and turn on to something else because there will be no teacher to provide explanations. The programme is also associated with rampant cases of plagiarism, cheating in exams, and pirating of content that learners get access to.

Finally, learners are at a high risk of disruptions from their lessons since they are at liberty to choose where to learn and when to learn. This means that the programme does not have a formal timetable like in school where lessons are centrally controlled. Furthermore, learning will be devoid of a particular order since learners themselves will be choosing what they want to learn, especially when they are at home. Eventually, it may be cumbersome to meet set objectives.

The description of M-Learning is a clear evidence of the role that technology is now playing in educational change. Though the transition may still be disfigured by some isolated challenges, people's focus should be on numerous advantages that are coupled with the technology and that ought to be the reason why they should seriously consider adopting the programme. Some technical hitches cannot absolutely be an impediment to the success of this noble course. Owing to the trend of the current technological advancement, the future is obviously going to be competitive for nearly every activity will require technological knowhow. Businesses, communication, and learning have already gone online. A lot of research activities in assorted fields are also done on the internet. In short, the internet has transformed the world into one small unit called 'global village' where one can traverse in a short while and achieve whatever he or she wants. With introduction and subsequent incorporation of technological applications in education such as mobile learning, anybody can access quality education from whichever quarters without being

limited by distance or economic disadvantage. Services of good teachers can be accessed from wherever one wants. The point of wishing to go to a particular school, college, or university before acquiring the kind of training one would like to have is now a thing of the past as MOOCs have solved that problem. Nobody in the contemporary society is therefore expected to give an excuse of having lacked the opportunity to go to school because learning can be customised to suit different situations and environments. With perpetual incorporation of technology in education, learning is hoped to become easier and more exciting than it used to be in the recent past. Impeccable standards of education are also expected because a lot of barriers to quality education have ostensibly been eradicated by technology. Therefore, education should become more an interesting game than an unnecessary burden.

About The Author: Mark Owens is a talented freelance writer at <https://specialessays.com>. He depicts his thoughts on the paper sheets.