

Chapter 10

Mobile Devices Contribute to Feedback Processes

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ABSTRACT

The use of mobile devices such as mobile phones and tablets in education is a problematic field of research that fits within the scope of assessment, mobile technologies, dialogic practices, and more broadly, feedback. This small pilot study investigated how supervising teachers incorporated a mobile device in the form of a video-enabled app into practicums to promote feedback in the form of dialogue and record achievements in alignment with requisite criteria. It further investigated the role of the app in the dialogic feedback process and the interactions between supervising teachers and preservice teachers when they undertake practical performance reviews. The findings showed that using mobile devices aids the dialogic practices of preservice teachers and leads to better outcomes. Despite the evidence, systemic organizational intent will be needed to reinforce the benefits and encourage adoption.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter sits within complex, interconnected, yet discrete fields of knowledge that embrace concepts of higher education assessment (Bennett, Dawson, Bearman, Molloy, & Boud, 2017; Boud & Falchikov, 2005, 2006; Denton & McIlroy, 2017) and include formative assessment models (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Rushton, 2005) for self-regulated learning (Carver, 2017), feedback (Dowden, Pittaway, Yost, & McCarthy, 2013; Molloy & Boud, 2014), mentoring (Hudson, 2010; Mena, García, Clarke, & Barkatsas, 2015) and the duality of practice-based learning supervision (Tillema, Smith, & Leshem, 2011). The researchers sought alignment between these areas of knowledge and the emerging capabilities of mobile devices such as iPads, Tablets, and mobile smart phones as part of the solution for pedagogical assessment issues in university teaching programs. These types of mobile devices had heretofore not been used in higher education assessment, so this study materialized as an exploration of their impact on feedback processes in the context of assessments, further elaborated in the following sections.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-0426-0.ch010

BACKGROUND

Practitioners in the field of education at a small regional university conceptualized a systematic, iterative approach to assessment feedback (Bennett, Dawson, Bearman, Molloy, & Boud, 2017) with school-based staff and preservice students as partners. They concluded that mobile devices could be part of the solution to the feedback and assessment issues being faced at the time (Dann & Allen, 2015).

Universities have recently been investigating the use of varied assessment and feedback practices (Carless & Boud, 2018) to improve teaching and learning. Unfortunately, the role of technology in higher education assessments has yet to be defined (Nicol & Milligan, 2006). This coincides with a need for enhanced clarity and transparency with regard to communicating assessment feedback (Juwah, Macfarlane-Dick, Matthew, Nicol, Ross, & Smith, 2004), and for feedback in initial teacher education to more closely reflect the learning intentions of school placements. At the time, the disparate nature of the feedback (Knight, 2002) being provided by supervising teachers has signalled a lack of reliability and validity in assessments (Dann & O'Neill, 2018; Stellmack, Konheim-Kalkstein, Manor, Massey, & Schmitz, 2009). These circumstances have led to the creation of a video-enabled application, subsequently developed into a Tablet and iPad application (App) for teacher candidates at a regional Australian university (Willis, Dann, Jones, Lowe, & Toohey, 2012). In a later study (Dann & Allen, 2015) found that supervising teachers' feedback in placement was confined to areas of their personal interest, so with this in mind, the App was designed to extend that approach by integrating clear and transparent university criteria for measuring performance in placements. Thereafter, Dann and Dann's (2018) research focus shifted to the processes and strategies employed in formative assessments, based on noticing (Cowie, Harrison, & Willis, 2018; Sherin, 2017) during practicum experiences, and later, tutorial presentations. Noticing became an important aspect of this research because noticing refers to the heightened awareness and aptitude of supervising teachers to observe, in order for their actions and reactions to effectively respond to their students' thinking, interests and needs (Cowie et al., 2018). Thus, the impetus for learning can be revealed and nurtured.

Akkerman and Meijer (2011) and Carless (2016) argued that noticing in the classroom should be supported by engagement in dialogic practices between supervising and preservice teachers. The dialogic process refers to conversation between the parties to attain understanding through dialogue with another, while at the same time, advancing personal thinking and reasoning. It goes beyond superficial interactions, and allows teachers and preservice teachers to challenge existing practices and test their capabilities in a safe and supportive environment (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2014; Parker, Patton, & O'Sullivan, 2016). Deglau, Ward, O'Sullivan, and Bush (2006) argued that dialogue is essential for teachers to understand and challenge policies, including for example, the national teaching standards in Australia, against which preservice teachers are assessed and that supervising teachers are required to interpret.

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