

Chapter 13

Learners–Mobile Interaction: African Substance and Style

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ABSTRACT

The increasing demand for education in African continent has motivated more research in mobile learning to describe, explain and predict changes and chances in leveraging mobile technology to learn anytime and anywhere. Mobile technologies provide learning beyond the classroom walls where learners can have access to resources according to their needs without involving teachers. In developing countries like Africa, mobile learning is still gaining its ground and remains under-studied. With technological advancements and high usage of mobile phones in Africa, the educational horizon has broadened. Mobile learning plays a major role in delivering education in Africa. The rapid use of mobile devices in mobile learning projects in Africa confirm that mobile learning is transforming the traditional way of learning, teaching and delivery of education by integrating social media and advanced mobile technologies in education. After a critical look at the current status as well as the latest development in mobile learning, this chapter presents a road map of m-learning to guide future action and thinking of learners, teachers and institutions in Africa. It also tracks trends and their impact, key theories and key findings of mobile learning. The current chapter ends with a critical analysis of technologies and key theories that can contribute to the sustenance of mobile learning in the African continent.

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INTRODUCTION

M-learning is being applied to the use of portable, small, handheld and lightweight electronic devices used for educational activities in classrooms, fieldwork, at work, home and when travelling (John Traxler & Jenny Leach, 2004). The devices include mobile phones (in particular but not exclusively smartphones), Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), audio players and new entrants include tablets (Regin Joy Conejar & Haeng-Kon Kim, 2014). Additionally John Traxler & Jenny Leach, (2004), argued that netbooks and laptops are technically not included as m-learning devices because they are not handheld, and they belong to the devices that employ the desktop WIMP (window, icon, menu, pointing device).

It is of great importance to firstly put forth difference between m-learning and electronic learning (e-learning). According Korucu & Alkan (2011) writers perceive m-learning as a naturally evolved form of e-learning. M-learning got its own distinguished technology and terminologies as opposed to e-learning as shown by the Table 1.

John Traxler (2007) states that the use of wireless, mobile, portable, and handheld devices are gradually increasing and diversifying across every sector of education and across both developed and developing countries. Technology-enabled needs a breakthrough every few years to reinvigorate it and drive thinking forward and the uptake and adoption of mobile technologies have opened a new learning platform, one that is ideally suited to increased informal learning and getting learning right into the personal space of learners.

Jiugen, Ruonan & Jianmin (2010) revealed that mobile learning (m-learning) is a new form of learning, using mobile network and tools, expanding digital learning channel, gaining educational information, educational resources and educational services anytime, anywhere as illustrated by. Asabere (2013) defined m-learning as a field that involves the use of mobile computing and wireless technology to enable learning occur anytime, anyplace and anywhere. Furthermore Asabere (2013) study shows that m-learning is the future of education in Africa and noted the benefits and disadvantages that come with it. Some of the benefits include:

- Mobile learning can occur at anyplace and anytime, and learning content can be accessed anywhere.
- Mobile learning process is not limited to one particular place.

Table 1. Terminology Comparison between M-Learning and E-Learning

E-Learning	M-Learning
Computer	Mobile
Bandwidth	GPRS,G3, Bluetooth
Multimedia	Objects
Interactive	Spontaneous
Hyperlinked	Connected
Collaborative	Networked
Media-rich	Lightweight
Distance learning	Situated learning
More formal	Informal
Simulated situation	Realistic situation
Hyperlearning	Constructivism, collaborative

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