Chapter 16
Exploring BYOD Usage in the Classroom and Policies

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results of an exploratory study that investigated instructor and student perceptions of in-class use of personal mobile devices and policies for appropriate practices. The study is based on an undergraduate course offered at a higher education institution in the United Arab Emirates. Eighteen students and one instructor participated in the study. A mix methods approach was adopted. Data collection consisted of a survey, focus group and individual interviews. Quantitative results suggested an overall tendency to use the devices rarely for content and non-content related activities. Qualitative results, however, indicated more usage of the devices, but not to the extent to cause disruptions in class. The study furthers the discussion on a bring your own device (BYOD) policy development. When developing BYOD policies for appropriate practices in the classroom, educational institutions should take into account students' context, culture and main stakeholders' opinion. Policy implementation should be complemented with training to support effective BYOD integration in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

The popularity of mobile technologies among university students is widespread (Dahlstrom & Bichsel, 2014). Consequently, higher education is gradually operating in an environment where students are bringing their own devices to campuses and lectures. The practice of bringing personal devices to university campuses started with laptops (Crompton, 2013). However, attention is shifting to small devices such as tablets and smartphones (Hwang & Wu, 2014; Sharples et al., 2014).

Bring your own device or BYOD has been considered as one of the four major technological trends set to influence higher education in the next few years (Johnson, Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2015; Karnad, 2014). Research shows that the integration of BYOD in the classroom can enhance the learning experience (e.g. Gikas & Grant, 2013; Kong & Song, 2015; Wang, Shen, Novak, & Pan, 2009). On the other hand, students' personal devices can also disrupt lectures (e.g. Baker, Lusk, & Neuhauser, 2012; Langmia & Glass, 2014). Disruptions may range from phone ringing to the use of social media (e.g. Campbell, 2006; Santos, 2015). Some instructors and universities perceive mobile devices as a disruption rather than teaching tools and may ban them from the classroom (Negrea, 2015).

Researchers have observed the ongoing need to not only investigate the use of personal mobile devices in the classroom but also explore policies for appropriate practices (Baker et al. 2012; Jackson, 2013; Tindell & Bohlander, 2012). Policies are needed to maximize the educational benefits of BYOD while reducing potential disruptions (Garrett, 2010). In line with this need, this paper presents findings from a study that explored student and instructor perceptions of in-class use of mobile devices and suggestions for policies. The study is part of a larger project implemented in three undergraduate courses taught in three different countries namely, Brazil, Egypt and United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the academic year of 2013-2014. This paper focuses on the UAE case only. The authors of this paper expect to advance more understating on how students use their devices in the classroom and contribute to BYOD policies that are based on student and instructor perspectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the debates about what actually BYOD means (Sharples et al. 2014), for the purpose of this paper, it refers to the notion of students using their own devices in teaching and learning (Johnson et al., 2015). In addition, although such practice started in the 1980s with students bringing laptops to university campuses (Crompton, 2013), there are different opinions of whether BYOD encompasses this tool. Traxler (2010) and Pegrum, Oakley and Faulkner (2014), for instance, see mobile devices as including mobile phones, smart phones, PDAs, tablets and digital media players. These devices are distinct from laptops as they offer a high degree of mobility and flexibility (Pegrum et al., 2014).

The BYOD model presents several challenges to higher education (Santos, 2015). One challenge relates to classroom disruptions. Students may, at any time, visit websites not related to the content of the lesson or check email that disrupt or distract them or their peers (Tal & Kurtz, 2014). Due to disruptions, instructors may show reluctance to allow BYOD in the classroom (Langmia & Glass, 2014; Thomas & O'Bannon, 2013).

Campbell (2006) surveyed student and instructor perceptions of mobile phones in the classroom to determine to what extent the devices were considered as a source of disruption. Both instructors and students agreed they were disruptive and supported policies to limit their use in class. However, further analysis suggested that the youngest students were more tolerant of phone ringing and were less supportive of policies limiting its use in class. The survey by Burns and Lohenry (2010) reported similar results.

In contrast, Baker et al. (2012) suggested important differences between instructor and student perceptions of mobile devices in the classroom. For example, although both participants agreed that phone ringing bothered them, the instructors viewed phone ringing as being more disruptive. The instructors preferred a more university-wide policy on the use of mobile devices in class, while students supported more jointly decided policies. Baker et al. also explored students' frequent use of their devices to perform

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