Chapter 17

Universities' Point of View to Introduce Mobile Devices in their Classrooms:
Redefining Education using a Common Mobile Platform – The Journey through Implementation

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the implementation and integration of a common mobile platform in multiple diverse learning environments in higher education. This exploratory study sought to understand how the use of iPads supported student learning and teacher instruction. In addition, the researchers identified the necessity of a strong infrastructure and professional development both, which are crucial in the implementation and integration process. The population consisted of incoming freshmen who range between 17-21 years of age in a southern region in Alabama. A constant comparative and taxonomy analysis was employed in efforts to provide themes and codes to organize and analyze the data derived from focus groups, interviews, surveys, and observations. The data revealed that students believed the iPad provided support to enhance student learning. Participants' perceived the iPad device as portable, convenient and easy to use.

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, Apple broke all sales records, just two years after the first Apple iPad hit the market [April 3, 2010]. Of the 200 million iPads sold since June 2014, nearly 8 million iPads are in schools (Schiller, 2012; Smith, 2014). A large adoption came from San Diego's unified School District, in which they invested 1.3 billion to equip all 650,000 students with a digital device. There were many challenges associated with this massive deployment; teachers were unable to get their data to provide differentiation. In addition, assessments were only available paper based and course work was not delivered on time. Many teachers scrambled to develop their own curriculum, often reverting to outdated textbooks. Funds for this massive deployment were procured through government funding and earmarked for technology upgrades (Prasertsilp & Olfman, 2014). In 2012, the Thailand government deployed nearly 530,000 tablets to support K-12 education in the country through a project called One Tablet Per Child (OTPC). Recently a district in Alabama received an Apple ConnectED grant in which Apple donated $100 million toward the provision of iPads, MacBook's, and other Apple related products. Apple also provided professional development tools to 114 schools to support the deployment. Out of the selected schools, 96% of students are eligible for free or reduce lunch programs. These numbers illustrate the mass adoption of devices for academic settings. In-service as well as pre-service teachers are all experiencing this mass influx of devices and scrambling to implement these mobile devices to support student learning.

Ubiquitous computing, Internet access, and the proliferation of affordable mobile devices have laid the foundation for our digital destiny. Today roughly, 6 billion people have access to a connected mobile device, yet 60% of the world's population will remain unconnected. Some of the lowest percentages will come from developing countries. Global initiatives are focused on distribution of device such as One-Laptop-Per-Child (OLPC) and World Ahead as well as national policies supporting mobile education in Spain, Singapore, Iran, Africa, and Ireland.

Apple is positioned to change the landscape of education due to the high level of functionality, low level of training, support, and maintenance of the iPad. Unprecedented levels of mobile devices have pervaded the landscape of education, changing the way we access information and utilize this information for education. Selection of the iPad is often driven by a wide range of educational decisions to support the educational setting. The lightweight portable device offers ten hours of battery life, which supports the portability of anytime anywhere learning and offering a high level of interactivity.

Mobile education takes place when students use portable devices such as iPhones, iPads, or tablets to access content and to interact with other learners anytime anywhere and many universities and colleges have begun to explore ubiquitous learning through the implementation of iPads. Most initiatives are small scale and often institution led. Studies range from single class pilots to campus wide distribution allowing participants the freedom to break away from the traditional classroom model, untethering students from their seats.

As schools begin to implement iPads for instruction, a clear rational should be identified prior to the adoption of any device. Most compelling reasons focus on accessibility (having anytime, anywhere), ease of use, increased productivity, collaboration, and personalization for teaching and learning. Adoption of device requires significant strategic planning to ensure a smooth integration with existing systems. Such planning involves technical networks, the development of ownership models and strategies for implementation to name a few.

Technology is not only affecting educational offerings in remote areas, but also advancing well-established practices in fully developed countries. UNESCO (2015) estimates that within five years more

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