

Chapter 23

Students' Perception of the Integration of Mobile Devices as Learning Tools in Pre-Primary and Primary Teacher Training Degrees

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ABSTRACT

University education is nowadays facing the need to rethink teaching processes carried out, to accommodate them to new understandings about how the human beings learn, also transcending the use, access and appropriation of a methodology adapted to changing times where, no doubt, mobile devices have a leading role. Besides their obvious communicative and playful function, teachers and learners must be aware of the pedagogical potential of these devices that can become allies in educational processes. This study analyzes the perception of university students, enrolled in the Pre-Primary and Primary Teacher Training Degrees at the University of Salamanca (Spain), about the use of mobile devices as tools to assist the learning process and as gadgets to practice and boost the learning process carried out in the classroom. Relevant outcomes have been extracted from the inspection of the data obtained through a survey to students, what has enabled us to draw interesting conclusions about the opinion of students about the inclusion of mobile devices as learning resources at tertiary level, that unravel the good disposition of the students polled towards the incorporation of these devices, both to university classes as well as to their future professional development.

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INTRODUCTION AND CURRENT SITUATION

From the late 70s of last century onwards, we are witnessing major technological changes that are greatly affecting today's knowledge society.

Both aspects -technologies and knowledge society - are constantly changing, moving at a high speed and therefore require from individuals / users a process of continuous learning for their professional performance, and also for the full development of their daily lives.

The need to adapt to changing times and social change has happened in all periods and historical moments but today, more than ever, current generations are forced to adapt to changing situations in all areas of human activity and especially to adopt new knowledge and skills that enable them to face what these changes entail. In short, it is a knowledge society that demands individuals a great capacity for learning, adaptability and flexibility (Cantillo, Roura & Sánchez, 2012; Sánchez, Olmos & García-Peñalvo, 2014c). Fulfilling this commitment involves walking about the same rate at which technological advances make it, increasingly satisfying to a greater extent the constant need of individuals to access information and communication in real time. This is undoubtedly revolutionizing the way of understanding communication and education, but not at the rhythm that would be desired in the latter area.

Despite the advances that take place every day in the knowledge society, it is still common in university classrooms for students to be invited not to use mobile devices. This is determined, in many cases, by the presumed wrong use that the student makes of it, what has mainly to do with the distractions and the fear that still exists towards the registration and subsequent publication of videos, recordings, images, etc., on Internet networks.

It is evident that in university classrooms there is still no clear awareness of the use of mobile devices in the teaching process, being this the main cause of the abysmal gap existing between the university and the reality experienced by students in their daily lives. From a socio-educational perspective, mobile learning breaks the historic- temporal teaching and learning barrier to make way for a new educational format firstly based on collaboration, flexibility, problem resolution and spontaneous, creative and informal learning; and, secondly, on mobility, connectivity, ubiquity and permanence (Sánchez, Iglesias & Pedrero, 2014; Iglesias, Sánchez & Pedrero, 2014; Iglesias & García, in press; Sánchez, Olmos & García-Peñalvo, 2014a; García-Peñalvo, & Colomo-Palacios, 2015).

Mobile devices, initially designed as communication tools, have revolutionized all aspects of human beings and are disrupting the educational processes to become teaching tools capable of transferring the classroom walls (Iglesias & Beltrán, 2012; García-Peñalvo, Colomo-Palacios, & Lytras, 2012; García-Peñalvo, Colomo-Palacios, & Lytras, 2012) and make it possible to be used anytime and anywhere without detriment to the educational action you want to achieve.

Nowadays, students are immersed in a technological world that makes them participate in a different kind of large-scale communication through the lifelong access to social networks, multiple messaging systems, and creative and dynamic environments that offer them endless opportunities for action anytime, anywhere.

All these aspects are forgotten in most cases in the educational field, where all that is achieved by prohibiting the use of mobile devices is generating a sense of isolation in students, who think they live and are part of a world that does not match them, feeling oblivious to everything happening in it.

Without any doubt, it is urgent for universities to open to the social and technological reality in which the students they train are, and where they move quite naturally and normally.

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