

Chapter 6

The Role of Mobile Learning in Developing Employability and Job-Related Skills at VTET Programs

Ahmed Mokhtar Abdelaziz

Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the role of mobile learning in developing employability and job-related skills in vocational and technical education and training (VTET) contexts. It is hoped that this chapter will contribute to the academic discussion on this topic by identifying a list of skills and discussing how mobile technologies can play a role in developing them. This chapter will also provide some insights and practical examples for instructors and program designers on effective utilization of mobile technologies for developing both the technical and soft skills. Finally, this chapter will provide some insights on the future direction of research in this area of study.

INTRODUCTION

Vocational and Technical Education and Training (VTET) plays a significant role in the development of human resources - especially in developing countries - by providing a means for creating and developing skilled manpower (Powell & McGrath, 2019; Akshay, Sreeram, Anand, Venkataraman, & Bhavani, 2012). VTET programs do not only equip trainees with the required skills, knowledge, and attitudes to perform a specific job, but also improve labour mobility, adaptability and productivity; thus, contributing to enhancing firms' competitiveness and redressing labour market imbalances (Baartman & De Bruijn, 2011; Stasz, 2001; Hillage & Pollard, 1998). Basically, VTET outcomes are "framed in terms of skills or competencies relating to particular vocational domains with, recently, a greater interest in what are increasingly referred to as twenty-first century or wider skills" (Lucas, 2014, p. 4).

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In this respect, King and Palmer (2010) defined *skill* as the “capability of accomplishing something with precision and certainty and the ability to perform a function acquired or learned with practice” (p. 32). Yet, evidence suggests that an identification of a list of the skill-sets needed to perform a specific job is a complex task because there appears to be a limited agreement amongst educationalists on what this list should include (Rao, 2014; Rodzalan & Saat, 2012). Arguably though, researchers often used to base their evaluation of the required skill-sets by distinguishing between *technical* and *generic* skills. In this sense, it can be argued that the following skills are the most commonly cited skills that VTET training programs focus on (Abdelaziz, 2018):

- Craftsmanship Skills (Technical Skills)
- Safety Skills
- Teamworking, Cooperation, and Collaboration Skills
- Creativity, Problem Solving, and Critical Thinking Skills
- Presentation Skills
- Communication Skills (Verbal and Written Communication)
- Independent, Self-Development, and Lifelong Learning Skills
- Searching Skills
- ICT Skills
- Typing Skills

Evidence-based research confirms that the acquisition and development of the above-mentioned skills require effective training programs, such as Community of Practice (CoP)-based, Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-based, and hands-on based programs (Brixiová, Kangoye & Said, 2020; Johnson & Proctor, 2017; Harrison, 2015). However, perhaps the question that might arise is: In the age of highly advanced and digital technology, what may be the most optimal approach to deliver effective VTET training programs? Perhaps it is possible to argue that *Mobile Learning* (M-Learning) can provide an ideal approach for effective VTET training programs (Vaidya, 2020; Ricky & Rechell, 2015). Yet, existing research on the role of M-Learning in delivering VTET training programs with focus on developing employability and job-related skills is limited, and a more in-depth understanding for its potential is still needed. Accordingly, this study is focused on answering the following research question:

Ø How does M-Learning impact the development of employability and job-related skills at VTET Programs?

The following sections will present a background on the issue followed by the methodology employed, the findings, discussion, and conclusion.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This section introduces a focused background on research on Vocational and Technical Education and Training (VTET) with a brief overview on M-Learning utilization for developing employability and job-related skills.

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