

## **Mobile Learning**

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Mobile learning or M-Learning is emerging as one of the solutions to the challenges faced by education. Its unique attributes of being personal, portable, and interactive, makes it an aid to formal and informal learning and thus holds enormous potential to transform the delivery of education and training.

M-learning is convenient in that it is accessible from virtually anywhere. Like other forms of E-learning, it is also collaborative. Sharing is almost instantaneous among everyone using the same content, which leads to the reception of instant feedback and tips.

M-Learning has become possible as a result of the advent of, and further development in mobile devices. Mobile devices such as handheld and tablet computers, MP3 players, smartphones and mobile phones offer modern ways to support the learning process which emphasizes "just-in-time-learning" as instruction can be delivered anywhere and at anytime through them. They are an attractive and easy means to maintain literacy skills and gain constant access to information, are affordable, can be easily distributed and thus hold great potential for reaching marginalized as well as far to reach groups providing them with access to further learning and development.

UNESCO has been in the fore front of promoting the use of mobiles for learning. It will hold the second UNESCO Mobile Learning Week (MLW) from 18 to 22 February 2013 at its Headquarters in Paris, France. The event aims to explore mobile learning as a unique and significant contribution to achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals of increasing education access, quality and equality. MLW 2013 will focus on three particular EFA goals as they relate to mobile learning:

- Improving levels of adult and youth literacy: how mobile technologies can support literacy development and increase reading opportunities
- Improving the quality of education: how mobile technologies can support teachers and their professional development
- Achieving gender parity and equality in education: how mobile technologies can support equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality for all, in particular for women and girls

Tutors who have used M-Learning programs and techniques have made the following value statements in favor of M-Learning.

- It is important to bring new technology into the classroom.
- Devices used are more lightweight compared to books and PCs.
- Mobile learning can be used to diversify the types of learning activities students partake in (or provide a blended learning approach).



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- Mobile learning supports the learning process rather than being integral to it.
- Mobile learning can be a useful add-on tool for students with special needs.
- Mobile learning can be used as a 'hook' to re-engage disaffected youth.
- It is potentially a more rewarding learning experience

It must be said that despite the numerous advantages M-Learning presents, it has its own challenges though. These include technical challenges such as Connectivity and battery life; Screen size and keyboard size; Meeting required bandwidth for nonstop/fast streaming; Number of file/asset formats supported by a specific device; Content security or copyright issues from authoring groups, Reworking existing E-Learning materials for mobile platforms; Limited memory and Frequent changes in device models/technologies/functionality

There are social challenges as well such as Accessibility and cost barriers for end users: Digital divide; How to access learning outside the classroom; and How to support learning across many contexts.

Educational challenges associated with M-Learning include Developing an appropriate theory of learning for the mobile age; Design of technology to support a lifetime of learning; Tracking of results and proper use of this information; Access to and use of the technology in developing countries and Risk of distraction.

Despite the challenges over the past ten years mobile learning has grown from a minor research interest to a set of significant projects in schools, workplaces, museums, cities and rural areas around the world.

Open Learning Exchange (OLE) Ghana recognizes the benefits of mobiles and M-Learning. Its Ghana Reads project will increasingly research into and continue to make use of low cost but durable mobile technology that fits the Ghanaian context to reach out to the teachers and pupils on the project.

OLE Ghana will however pursue this Mobile Education agenda having at the back of its mind that is important in building competencies among teachers that can be enabled by mobile technologies consideration is given to ways that mobile technologies can complement and be integrated into a range of technology access modalities and pedagogy that teachers are familiar with.