

Mobile Learning: An Innovation in Learning for the Future

Mobile learning in the current meaning of the term has developed since about 2002. It grows out of a community of practitioners and researchers drawn from education and technology. In the 'developed' world, their work and theorising have been both an extension of and a reaction against the previous ten or twenty years of e-learning whilst in the 'developing' world, these have extended the methods of open and distance learning and improved service delivery. Mobile learning was originally defined in terms of learning using mobile technologies but the ongoing debate about definition grows increasingly sophisticated and connects to research into the social changes produced by increased connectivity and mobility.

Mobile learning has matured and now has a peer-reviewed academic journal, the International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning and a professional body, the International Association for Mobile Learning. Most importantly however, mobile learning has demonstrated that it can:

- Take learning to individuals, communities and countries that were previously too remote, socially or geographically, for other educational initiatives.
- Enhance and enrich the concept and activity of learning, beyond earlier conceptions of learning.

However, development has been driven by pedagogic necessity, technological innovation, funding opportunity and the perceived inadequacies of conventional e-learning. We see changes and increases in the personal, domestic and social use of personal mobile devices. Mobile devices redefine learning by the way they redefine the nature and significance of knowledge. They provide increasing anywhere/anytime access to it; they also provide just-in-time/just-for-me access to it. This may be the basis for individualised and personalised learning and for fragmented and isolated learning, exacerbated by the way in which mobile devices deliver knowledge 'chunked', structured and connected in very different ways from the lecture, the web and the book.