Chapter 2

# Enhancing Elementary Classroom Learning Experiences With Mobile Learning:
## Implications for Practice

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter discusses the importance of mobile learning in teaching elementary classroom digital natives. The author grounds mobile learning into the individual characteristics of young learners, the theory of mobile learning, multiliteracy pedagogy, and the SAMR framework to emphasize a dynamic interplay between learners, teachers, technology, and learning environment created by mobile learning. The chapter presents a range of activities that leverage the affordances of mobile devices by using images, audio, and QR codes in the instructional design in elementary classrooms. These activities foster student autonomy, collaboration, and critical thinking while promoting visual and digital literacies. The chapter emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and instructional design in leveraging mobile learning effectively. Activities suggested by the author are accompanied by step-by-step instructions and examples, which makes them relevant both for pre-service and in-service elementary school teachers, teacher trainers, and professional development providers.*

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching Generation Alpha children, also called digital natives, currently attracts the interest of both scholars and practitioners (Omar et al., 2021), (Horvat & Kuzma-Kachur, 2021), (Kaplan-Berkley, 2022). According to McCrindle, who coined the term "Generation Alpha", these children are born between 2010 and 2025 and currently attend early childhood institutions and elementary schools (McCrindle & Fell, 2020). Researchers say the distinctive characteristic of digital natives is being exposed to the digital world from a very early age and being used to digital communication and online learning. Other characteristics of these learners include learning by doing, rather than learning from listening to others (McCrindle & Fell, 2020). The fact that these children can easily access information, has ultimately altered the role of the teacher from being the only source of knowledge to being a facilitator of the learning process. As a result, teachers are required to be proficient with the technology used by digital natives and know how to tailor instructional approaches to the needs of learners.

The boost in the interest towards mobile learning is aligned with the continuous advance of gadgets after 2005 (Crompton, 2013). Considerable attention is paid to developing instructional activities incorporating gadgets in the educational process (O'Connell, 2021). According to the study *Education Technology Use in Schools* (2019), 65% of American teachers use education technology on a daily basis in their classrooms and 45% of elementary school students use it for learning. Additionally, around 60% of practitioners state they want to use digital technologies more often. Although there are numerous reasons for this current state of play, the author argues that implementing various classroom management techniques and low-stakes technology-based activities can enhance the educational process together with developing multiliteracy skills of young learners.

In the author's opinion, effective integration of gadgets into the educational process should be grounded in the individual psychological characteristics of young learners. Gadgets have the potential of becoming a powerful tool of individualization, allowing instructors to accommodate learners with various learning styles and unique characteristics of digital natives. From the psychological standpoint, elementary classroom students are gradually moving from the preoperational (2-7 y.o.) to the concrete operational (7-11 y.o.) stage of their development. During early childhood, cognitive development is characterized by divided attention, selective attention with sensitivity to visual information, short attention span and gradual development of sustained attention. Additionally, young learners demonstrate the development of working memory and executive function, which refers to self-regulatory processes. In middle childhood, the capacity of the children's working memory develops, and the ability to switch between tasks, metacognition and critical thinking improves (Tyler,

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