

Chapter 4

Integrating Mobile Learning, Digital Storytelling and Social Media in Vocational Learning

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the focus falls on integrating mobile learning, digital storytelling, and social media into vocational learning practices. The literature review introduces the development of mobile learning and digital storytelling and presents ways in which these concepts can piggyback the interactive features of social media. A case study during which participating students used mobile phones and videos with a mobile social video application (MoViE) to design and produce representative digital stories based on local tourism attractions is also presented. Twenty-five students participated in the internet inquiry about student attitudes towards the use of social media as part of their vocational expertise and their learning experiences with mobile devices and MoViE. This chapter illustrates the benefits as well as the shortcomings of the used learning concept in order to produce more concrete knowledge of the use of mobile devices and social video applications in learning.

INTRODUCTION

Today, mobile technologies like cell phones or laptop computers are widespread. Mobile manufacturer Ericsson estimates that there were half a billion mobile broadband subscribers in 2010

and that this figure will reach close to five billion by 2016 (according to Johnson, Smith, Levine, & Haywood, 2011). A considerable proportion of cell phones is already multifunctional smartphones that enable communication in several ways, information seeking on the Internet and e.g. video

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capturing and sharing through social networks. As the number of active mobile accounts continues to grow rapidly, the supporting infrastructure will also continue to expand – including remote areas (Johnson et al., 2011). Mobile devices are increasingly becoming capable tools for learning with their ubiquity, mobility and the wide range of things one can do with them. In addition, because of their popularity among students, schools do not always have to buy or maintain mobile devices to take advantage of their functionalities.

As mobile devices are increasingly common and ubiquitous, mobile media is also finding its way into discussions about modern education. Although, according to Mwanza-Simwami (2007), mobile learning has become somewhat of a trend, learning with mobile devices is still a relatively new research area, and more work is therefore needed to understand the benefits and effects of using mobile technologies to support learning. It is therefore important to discuss the characteristics of learning with technology and to build theoretical concepts and frameworks that support the design and implementation of applications that are pedagogically meaningful for learning. Social media and Web 2.0 technologies provide mobile learners dimensions that enable frequent, multifunctional, and synchronous or asynchronous interactions even between distant partners, providing the base to increase the conversational and collaborative characteristics of learning. These technologies also enable easy production and sharing of digital videos which education and learners can benefit in many ways (e.g. Hakkarainen, 2007).

In this chapter we review the literature related to the development of mobile learning and digital storytelling and introduce the possibilities these two concepts or methods can offer when combined with the features of social media. In addition, we introduce a case study where students used mobile phones and a mobile social video application, MoViE, to create digital stories as part of their vocational education. The questionnaire used for data collection also included questions about students' social media use and their attitudes

towards social media as part of their vocational expertise. We will use the case study as an example to illustrate the possibilities but also the complications related to the use of technologies in education. The case study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. *How students perceive using social media as part of their vocational expertise?*
2. *How did students experience the use of mobile camera phones and MoViE to create digital stories for the purpose of learning?*

In practice, the study was conducted during a teaching experiment that was arranged as a part of vocational tourism and audiovisual communication (AVC) studies. The participants included 14 tourism and 20 media students from two vocational colleges. The data was collected by means of an Internet-based questionnaire and contains both qualitative and quantitative data. A detailed description of the teaching experiment, participants, data and analysis methods is presented in the methods section of this chapter.

BACKGROUND

The theoretical background of our study is based on the concepts of mobile learning and digital storytelling. We will consider the integration of these two concepts together with the features and possibilities social media provides for learning. We will also contemplate how these concepts relate to the concept of meaningful learning and elaborate on the possibilities and shortcomings of mobile learning based on our own experiences during the case study.

A Short History of Mobile Learning

Mobile devices allow flexible learning according to times and places. One can, however, argue about which tools actually are truly mobile. We certainly think that, for example, laptops allow one to ef-

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