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Pedagogical Intervention of M-Learning for Achieving Curriculum Objectives in Distance Education System

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Abstract: *The integration of M-learning and its pedagogical intervention in distance education of Indian open universities creating adaptive and personalize learning environment. Today's information society is an internet based knowledge sharing society .Mobility of ICT tools creates multiple opportunities for new forms of learning. M-learning works as a mediating tool to enable learning process to build and construct understanding, personal relationship with pear group and teachers. Mobile phones provides easy access for information gathering and sharing. Indian open universities have a lot of quality content with pedagogical based curriculum .The main gap is an interaction between learners and counsellors of desired distance education program executed by the respective open university whereas smart phones bridging the gap and playing as an effective ICT tools for achieving specific and general objective of the curriculum. Learners enrolled in any distance education are using mobile apps and simulation to develop the cognitive, affective and psychomotor based learning. Nowadays Social networking through mobile provides easy access to the learner. Notification and mobile feeds through mobile apps playing a vital role to understand the pedagogy of the desired curriculum. Pedagogical intervention of M-learning mainly emphasize on enquiry based approach whereby a learner can ask or raise his query through mobile apps and discuss with the pear group for solution. M-Learning works on collaboration, association and contextualization of the curriculum.*
Keywords: *M-learning, cognitive, Affective, Psychomotor, pedagogy*

I. INTRODUCTION

The challenge of the Open University like UPRTOU and IGNOU, as the largest distance education institutions in India, is to come up with innovative ways of supporting students who are not only geographically isolated from their teachers as sources of information, but also separated from their peers as sources of support.

The effects of such isolation on distance learners can inhibit any possibility for engagement with teachers, study material and peers. In distance education, the educational process is usually reduced from a dialogue to a monologue where a teacher sends out study material to the students. The assumption is that distance learners, do not need mediation or support as they go through their study material. Thorpe argued that "course materials prepared in advance of study, however learner centred and interactive they may be, cannot respond to a known learner". One of the main barriers of learning in distance education is the absence of interaction with other human beings in a learning environment. For these students, learning is most successful when people interact with each other through interrogating and sharing their description of the world. Mediated Interaction is central to any educational experience irrespective of whether the students are studying through distance or not⁴. The problem arises when interaction between a lecturer and a student is not as constant as that which exists in a conventional face-to-face situation. The incorporation of mobile technologies, such as cell phones, in education can address this need because they can enable interaction between a student and the lecturer, as well as between a student and her or his peers.

II. PEDAGOGICAL INTERVENTION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Informal learning that most students are familiar with to develop formal learning opportunities for distance education students. The potential for using cell-phones in bridging the distance is enormous in a country of limited access to electricity and telephone networks; poor roads and postal services; and fewer people who have expertise of using computers. These limitations have led to the rapid growth of wireless technology. Over the last ten years, cell phone users in Africa have increased at an annual rate of 65% - twice the global average⁶. In South Africa alone, the cell phone penetration is estimated at 98 percent. More than 90 percent IGNOU and uprtou students own or have access to a cell phone that can be used in education for collaboration, tutoring, research, reading and writing purposes.

Although many technologies have been used in the past to enhance interaction in distance education, Keegan⁷ argues that “it is not technologies with inherent pedagogical qualities that are successful in distance education, but technologies that are generally available to citizens” p3. Throughout the history of distance education, researchers and theorists have been involved in finding ways to bridge the distance between the students, their lecturers and their peers. Using cell phones is much more suited in supporting distance learning because it can reach those students who do not have access to other technological devices. A recent survey found that 39% of urban South Africans and 27% of rural residents are now browsing the internet from their cell phones⁸. Cell phones are more accessible to most rural communities in terms of cost, geographic coverage and ease to use. Distance Education system follow the pedagogic approach that best support effective use of cell phones in the distance education context. It will draw on the integration of the distance education theories to argue for the principles that guide pedagogy and practice in using cell phones for the purpose of supporting distance education students. In this paper, distance education pedagogies will be mapped according to Moore’s student-student; student-content and student-student interaction principles. Interaction is meant to provide cognitive, affective and systematic support to students in an education environment. The success of any distance education system is based on three principles: “excellent (learning) and teaching material, high quality student support services and efficient logistical systems”. Out of these three areas, student support services are widely considered as critical in the success of distance education programmes. Studies have shown that proper provision of student support services may break learners’ isolation and meet not only the academic demands of students in distance education but also their social needs.

III. SUPPORTING STUDENTS COGNITIVELY

Cell phones can be used as a tool to facilitate dialogue through synchronous and asynchronous learning. The lecturer can send questions to students via different types of cell phone messaging systems, i.e. twitter, MXit, WhatsUp, SMS etc. Through the development of the concept of mobile audio Wikipedia, Ford and Leinonen⁷⁶ used SMS and text-to-speech technologies to enable access to information using voice. Students who participated in this study were able to capture information; take photos; compile slide presentation; record and store information. These tools allowed students to interact with their lectures using multiple formats that cell phones have to offer. These formats can enable students to work on activities within the study material and briefly send a message to the lecturer reporting on how he or she went about doing the assignment.

IV. SUPPORTING STUDENTS AFFECTIVELY

The use of cell phones in education offer offers a more interactive education encouraging critical thinking, communications skills, and flexibility for both students and teachers. Students need lecturers to help those complete courses on time and support them when stress becomes a problem. This problem can be mitigated through motivational SMS messages. In distance education, there is strong correlation between care and learner motivation. To keep students motivated, lecturer should send students feedback almost immediately because students rely on lecturers comments on their assignments. Many students have doubts about their capabilities of knowing whether or not they are on the right track, feedback, especially the one they receive almost immediately motivates them and gives them strength to continue.

V. BRIDGING THE DISTANCE

The Pedagogy of Mobile Learning in Supporting Distance Learners their lecturers. To address this challenge of feedback, comments can be sent to individual students through SMS texting. Students can also be encouraged to use different types of platforms to communicate with the lecturer. A lecturer can periodically post a topic for discussion and assist students as they go about with their learning. Distance education need to feel the presence of the lecturer. When the lecturer send information via personal and situated devices such as cell phones, students feel supported, they develop a positive relationship with their lecturers and the university and they find learning more pleasurable and this in turn supports their motivation.

VI. SUPPORTING STUDENTS SYSTEMATICALLY

In distance education, lecturers are expected to provide an organised plan and curriculum and communicate with the students via tutorial letters, emails and telephonically throughout the process of learning. To ensure that students are engaged in this process, a lecturer can encourage students through assessment exercises which can be sent to the university and be automatically marked and the results could be sent back to students through cell phones. This immediate and personal feedback is possible through the use of cell phones. Lecturers, on the other hand, could go through the students’ responses and identify the problem areas that may need more clarification. The university can also develop a variety of cell phone applications to enhance feedback to students.

VII. STUDENT-STUDENT INTERACTION

To most students, learning is a social process whereby a student feels the need to interact with fellow learners. This is significant in the learning process because the student needs to be active in learning interaction in collaboration with other people. To address the problem of isolation, most distance learners reported that they belonged to informal study groups even though this is neither encouraged nor discouraged by the university. It is in these study groups that students adopt a communal approach to learning by sharing responsibility for reading and explaining course material. Through these groups “students can feel immediate identification with others in their group and so lose feelings of isolation and over anxiety.” In most African cultures, group interaction is a strong factor determining values and social interaction. It is in these study groups that students adopt a communal approach to learning by sharing responsibility for reading and explaining course material⁸⁰. The notion of helping each other is based on the South African traditional concept of ‘ubuntu’ meaning “humanity to others” which espouses collectivity and harmony. Learning in support groups is embedded in cultural beliefs and practices. That’s why these students become extremely lonely when they are expected to learn independently.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Despite several studies that proved that mobile learning can be used to enhance learning, the use of these devices should not be seen as a panacea to support distance students. The success of using this technology should be based on its affordances, that is, its ability to enhance interaction in education. The multimedia functionality of cell phones and its simpler and user-friendly interface make cell phone easier to be used by people who may be uncomfortable with using other technologies such as computers. However, cell phones’ limited ability to carry large chunks of information due to screen size can make it impossible to support certain types of pedagogies. Despite this limitation, young people are already inventing ways to use their phones to learn. It is this enthusiasm from young people that we need to exploit for the benefit of supporting distance education students. Therefore, cell phones should not be used on their own as a delivery tool for study material, they should be used to support printed study material, online learning and other forms of teaching.

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