Work-Based Mobile Learning: towards a socio-ecological approach

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1. Mobile learning as meaningful, contextual, communicative and life-long activity
Functional framework (Patten et al 2006)
Our approach

• new habitus of learning (Kress and Pachler, 2007)
• we see a very close connection between meaning-making and learning, in semiotic terms between the making of signs and the making of concepts
• learning as purposive work with cultural resources
• people increasingly see their life-worlds framed both as a challenge and as an environment and a potential resource for learning
• their expertise is individually appropriated in relation to personal definitions of relevance
• the world has become the curriculum populated by mobile device users in a constant state of expectancy and contingency
Learner-generated content and contexts; spaces for and sites of learning

- users create their own content and contexts for learning: users are constantly negotiating their mutual understanding of the situations in which they find themselves
- mobile devices increase the students’ ability to bring into fruitful synergy the knowledge distributed across communities of use
- spheres of and for mobility (IADIS 2009):
  - in physical space,
  - of technology,
  - in conceptual space
  - in social space
  - dispersed in time
- one of the defining characteristics is learning across contexts
• spaces of social media (Lock 2007):
  • secret spaces (SMS, MMS, IM)
  • group spaces (Facebook, Myspace, Bebo)
  • publishing spaces (Blogger, Flickr, YouTube)
  • performing spaces (Second Life, World of Warcraft)
  • participation spaces (Meetup, Twitter)
  • watching spaces (mobile tv)
• context has both a static and a dynamic dimension; the static elements
  (‘the stuff to be learnt’), process (‘ways that stuff can be learnt’) and
  place (‘where stuff can be learnt’) interact with each other dynamically
  (‘linkages’) (Luckin et al 2005)
• importance of authenticity of and across context(s); authenticity of
  practices
• importance of meta-level awareness of the learner about the learning processes they engage in across spaces, time and sites of learning; also of purposefully designed learning networks and paths

• interacting domains:
  • external representations of knowledge,
  • individuals’ internal conceptualizations of knowledge, and
  • the social uses made of knowledge and through which it is constructed

• design for ‘new geographies of learning’, i.e. “configurations of space, place, and network that respect the social and collaborative nature of learning – while still exploiting the dynamic potential of networked collaboration” (Divitini and Morken 2007); learning is increasingly taking place within and across looser communities which necessitates a focus on the seamless integration of different learning experiences; conditions for ‘spatial contiguity’ and ‘spatial dispersal’
Some issues for the design of mobile WBL

- socio-cultural developments will soon lead to there no longer being a meaningful differentiation between media for learning inside and outside formal educational settings – how does this play out in the context of WBL?
- the ability of technology to transcend the unaided, individual human mind, i.e. to augment intelligence, is becoming increasingly ubiquitous; Web 3.0 and semantic networks will determine future uses of technologies, also in learning contexts
- the augmentation of intelligence through technology can best be understood as the most recent stage of externalisation and objectification of experiences and insights as well as an enhancement of our capacities for developing conceptual worlds (Säljö, 2007)
- ubiquitous, and context-aware technologies result in a shift ‘from smart planning to smart situated actions’ (Fischer and Konomi, 2007)
2. Socio-cultural ecological approach to mobile learning

Theoretical and conceptual framework of mobile learning:
• educational uses of mobile devices,
• viewed in ecological terms,
• as part of cultural and pedagogical contexts in transformation.

The socio-cultural ecology considers different components:
• the learners’ agency, appropriation and cultural practices,
• their everyday lives and learning contexts,
• structures and cultural resources as potential links between different system components.

All for the benefit of learners.
Agency

Learners can be seen to increasingly display a new habitus in which

• they constantly see their life-worlds framed both as a challenge and as an environment and a potential resource for learning,
• their expertise is individually appropriated in relation to personal definitions of relevance and
• the world has become the curriculum populated by mobile device users in a constant state of expectancy and contingency
Cultural practices

- mobile devices are increasingly used for social interaction, communication and sharing;
- learning is viewed as culturally situated meaning-making inside and outside of institutional contexts for learning;
- media use in everyday life has achieved cultural significance
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Structures

• learners increasingly live in a society of individualized risks, new social stratifications, individualized mobile mass communication and highly complex and proliferated technological infrastructure;

• learning is significantly governed by the curricular frames of educational institutions / the workplace with specific approaches towards the use of new cultural resources for learning
Appropriation of 'mobile' cultural resources for learning

- Increase of (potential for) informal learning outside the school
- Educational institutions no longer define alone what is learning
- Social networking
- Socio-cultural milieus
- Change of mass communication and media convergence
- Convergence of physical and virtual spaces

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3. Discussion and conclusion: productivity vs. cultural practices, structures, situations and agency?
Socio-cultural ecology

- focus: education, personal development, leisure, lifelong learning
- aim: success in personalised, self-responsible, learner-centred learning

Workplace learning

- focus: workplace
- aim: professionality, productivity, skills

Framed by objective needs and affordances

Tensions between learner and structural affordances
Some questions

• How are learners making technology their own (appropriating technology) for and through
  • meaning-making / learning
  • identity formation
  • social interaction
  • entertainment?

• What boundaries exist between users’ everyday lives, their life-worlds and the world of work and how can the structures, agency and cultural practices of users personal life-worlds be made fruitful for work-based learning?
Mo-LeaP: The mobile learning projects database (www.moleap.net)
Book

Norbert Pachler, Christoph Pimmer, Judith Seipold (Eds.):

Work-based mobile learning: Concepts and cases.
A handbook for academics and practitioners.

Oxford (Peter Lang) 2010