



mEducation



MLEARN 2012

Pre-conference workshop – 15 October 2012

SWOT analysis created from the discussion by workshop participants

SWOT Analysis of the mobile education sphere

Strengths (Slide 1 of 5)

- Provides mobility – allows users to access information, data, calls and messages anytime and anywhere (connectivity assumed)
- Empowers teachers and students with information
- Can engage learners, particularly reluctant learners or those who may have found difficulty with traditional education methods
- Offers a reliable, easy-to-access service
- Is a motivational tool, not just for young learners, but for older learners too
- Acts as a catalyst to provide level of interactivity between parents/guardians and their children
- M2M* is viewed as an “enabler”

* M2M is an acronym for machine-to-machine, and broadly refers to machines exchanging information and performing actions without needing human action

SWOT Analysis of the mobile education sphere

Weaknesses (Slide 2 of 5)

- Lack of consistent policy usage in schools – some schools ban devices, others promote them. More guidance is required, when best to use them, how to use them etc. This leads to the broader discussion about the skills which are needed by students in the 21st Century
- Difference between the perceptions of what is needed in education between technology developers and educationalists
- The base of 'apps' remains limited. There are competing platforms, networks, modes of access etc
- Importance of not excluding learners just because they do not possess the most up-to-date technology (to access the best learning opportunities)
- Compatibility issues are experienced with different devices – a good browser for developing countries is a “must”
- Target audience for mobile devices is not always considered – they are used by people of all backgrounds and ages

The technology is only as good as the person using it!

SWOT Analysis of the mobile education sphere

Opportunities (Slide 3 of 5)

- There are many stakeholders who can become involved in mobile learning, eg the government and their ministries, national and regional authorities, IT industries (mobile network operators, service providers), universities, colleges, schools, teachers, learners, parents and publishers
- Now devices can be used 'in situ', whereas previously learning was fixed in terms of place and time (even e-learning via desktop computers)
- Increased flexibility for students in terms of what they can learn, when, and the extension to the traditional school environment
- Offers opportunities for new ways of learning (eg collaborative learning), and teaching (teachers can share materials and collaborate too)
- Learners can create their own content, empowering individuals
- Increased access to learning content and open resources
- Teachers are central to helping to making the best use of these new opportunities

SWOT Analysis of the mobile education sphere

Opportunities (Slide 4 of 5)

- Teachers need opportunities for support from their school systems, and ministries of education. Thought and assistance must be given as to how best to integrate their use in a broad way, but also to integrate them into curriculum areas where there is a large teaching load
- Different aspects can be used to engage learners, eg gaming, which can make learning more fun
- Educational tools are increasingly being used outside of the traditional educational environment, eg the rise of personal tutoring
- BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) may provide an opportunity for an institution to save money, in terms of not having to provide fixed computers, or laptop infrastructure support
- Digital books cost 30% less than paper-based books, and so could represent a cost saving (assuming parents/schools purchase them and the required books are available)
- Broadly people are becoming more dependent on mobile services (NB this also means they are increasing their demands on the quality provided)

SWOT Analysis of the mobile education sphere

Threats (Slide 5 of 5)

- Teachers may fear the use of mobile devices may disturb the lesson/change their way of teaching/mean they lose control
- Integration and innovation may be difficult when the curriculum is already extensive
- Students tend to be measured using traditional means, which may not take into account the learning/understanding promoted using mobile devices
- Teachers are (rightly) concerned with the protection of children in their care
- Broadband capacity needs to be increased – possibly through partnerships
- Mobile network operators are often unsure what their role is in education – there is a need for work on business models which could be adopted
- Educationalists often like to create open resources with the emphasis on sharing these with the educational community – this does not necessarily always meet publishers' requirements
- Educational publishers can fear loss of control of content/copyright issues
- The majority of the teaching material on the internet is in the English language
- There is no inspection body regulating e-tutoring