

Mobiles and Mobility: Implications for Education

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In seeking to explore the implications of mobiles and mobility for education, there are too many perspectives for one short review. We will therefore focus on the personal, cultural and social implications. These hinge on the essential difference between desktop technologies and mobile technologies, a difference that means we can ignore the former but not the latter. Desktop technologies can be ignored but not mobile technologies; desktop technologies operate in their own small world, mobile technologies operate in *the* world. Desktop technologies are tied to buildings, mobile technologies to people.

Interacting with a mobile is woven into all the times and places of people's lives. This affects people's sense of time, space, place and location, their affiliations and loyalties to groups and communities, the ways in which they relate to other individuals and to groups, their sense of their identity, and their ethics, that is their sense of what is right, what is acceptable and what is appropriate. Mobiles propel communities and discussions into physical public and private spaces, forcing changes and adjustments to all three as we learn to manage more fluid contexts. Mobile shift agency from institutions to people.

Mobiles erode established notions of time as a common structure and reconfigure the relationships between spaces, between public spaces and private ones, and the ways in which these are penetrated by mobile virtual spaces and this is accompanied by reconfiguration of what goes on in those spaces. There is a growing dislocation of time and place, devaluing the *here* and the *now*. Educational institutions are defined by places and physical locatedness and by educational activities that take place in the very spaces that mobiles transform. Mobiles are also redefining cultural practices such as conversation. In order to facilitate learning, educators must function in these rapidly evolving, contradictory social contexts and spaces, and must also recognise how different learning activities map into these evolving contexts and spaces. This is increasingly difficult since transience and fragmentation are characteristics of the social impact of mobiles. In redefining discourse and conversation, mobiles are also redefining models of learning that often rest on a Socratic or dialogic base, forcing some educators to develop alternatives to the hegemony of social constructivism.

Mobiles also affect the processes by which ideas, images, information and hence learning are produced, stored, distributed, delivered and consumed. Now everyone, wherever they are, can produce content to learn, and everyone one can discuss it *anywhere/anytime* and *just-in-time, just-for-them, just-enough*. Mobiles deliver knowledge 'chunked', structured and connected in very different ways from the lecture, the web. These changes do produce more fragmented, transient and local knowledge, a broadening and breaking up of genres, challenging the educational institution's role as the gatekeeper, custodian and arbiter of knowledge and learning.

Ethics, taste, behaviour, manners, mores, fashion and language are all expressions of identity, community and culture. Mobiles have an increasing impact on all of them, and more obviously on the nature of work, employment and the economy.

The whole context of formal education is changing; is it possible that technical enhancements to the delivery and support of an updated curriculum, technical fixes as negotiated between technologists and educators, are no longer adequate? Can the education system, especially the institutions of formal learning, make tactical, technical changes and reforms, is *business-as-usual* still possible? Or is it possible that the education system in its present is somehow broken and no longer *fit-for-purpose*?