Editorial

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1   Introduction

Research and development in the areas of mobile technologies and delivery techniques is mission critical to the acceptance and implementation of mobile-learning (m-learning). Given the impressive variety of portable hardware as well as machine independent software available, the practice of m-learning is expected to increase among learners of all ages, irrespective of race, class or gender. Whether they are corporations that encourage m-learning among employees or institutions and firms that are content developers, the decision to pursue or to continue with any investments must be supported by sound assessment analysis. For institutions of learning, those assessments must also be aligned with state policies and accreditation outcomes of the governing agency.

    The focus of this Special Issue is on the assessment of m-learning technologies and delivery techniques. Assessment areas are broadly defined to include all the outcomes that can affect individual as well as group success factors, managerial decisions, product qualities, service effectiveness and evaluation measures. After a rigorous double blind

review process, six high quality manuscripts were selected for inclusion in this special issue. These manuscripts were included because they contain

1   real world case studies

2   taxonomies that are based on grounded theories

3   robust methodologies and empirical results

4   assessment instruments and techniques with proven success.

2   Inside this issue

This special issue exemplifies the advances made in m-learning by experts across the globe. Fifteen scholars representing nine institutions of higher learning from four countries contributed to this special issue.

The first paper, 'From disaster recovery to Mobile Learning: a case study' by Omar, Liu and Koong describes how Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) succeeded in becoming an e-learning campus after Hurricane Rita and Hurricane Katrina. In addition to provide basic continuous education to its displaced students, the institution was able to migrate and utilise m-learning to move forward with its mission of providing higher education to students from diverse backgrounds.

The second paper, 'Development of a mobile learning model with usability features for online education' by Wei, Zhuo and Zhang studied interactive features that are crucial to the success of m-learning. Firstly, the paper developed an interactive m-learning model with six interactive modules to analyse interactive usability features among instructor, student and content. These modules were further decomposed and 76 features were identified. Secondly, the Interactive M-Learning Questionnaire (IMLQ) was developed to quantitatively measure these interactive m-learning usability features. Using factor analysis, they found 15 interactive m-learning dimensions. A comparison between modules showed that people have no different preferences on different modules.

The third paper, 'Hybrid learning and effects on student assessment outcomes' by Tanguma, Liu and Koong examined the effects of hybrid learning on student performance, attrition and satisfaction as indicated on the faculty evaluations. Using either online or face-to-face quizzes, this study found that students enrolled in the former provided the instructor with better faculty evaluation results. There were. differences in student performances as measured by the test scores. Moreover, the attrition rate using the face-to-face method was also higher. However, there was insufficient evidence to show that the proportion of grades attained were different.

The fourth paper, 'Faculty, are you ready for mobile learning? E-learners say they are geared up and ready to engage' by Corbeil, Butler and Valdes-Corbeil examined the benefits and challenges of m-learning, the most common mobile devices and how they can be used to facilitate learning, and the pedagogical implications of m-learning. The results of a survey on mobile technologies were also presented.

The fifth paper, 'A psycho-pedagogical approach to m-learning in a developing-world context' by Fotouhi-Ghazvini, Excell, Moeini and Robinson studied the potential of m-learning to contribute to development in a typical rapidly-developing country (Iran). Established educational theories are applied in order to classify potential modalities for m-learning: sample surveys of the reactions of typical user groups were taken and

analysed. It is concluded that m-learning will best be executed within the informal framework of learning, not only supplementing the school curriculum, but also extending powerfully into lifelong learning, especially for isolated rural/agricultural communities. In addition, the standard mobile phone is, and will continue for some time to be, the dominant platform.

The last paper, 'SMS enhanced vocabulary learning for mobile audiences' by Song reported on a small pilot study to explore the role of Short Message Service (SMS) in English as Second Language (ESL) vocabulary learning for mobile audiences. In this study, SMS was integrated into web-based vocabulary learning. An online test system was set-up for recorded assessment data collection, and an open-ended questionnaire interview was conducted via e-mail to collect the qualitative data. The research findings show significant improvements in the learner performance and in their attitudes towards using SMS in their vocabulary learning.

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