

Swan TAFE: SMS Mobile Communication Model



Alexander Hayes

alexander.hayes@swantafe.edu.au

**Research & Development Project Officer
Teaching & Learning Portfolio
Swan TAFE, Perth
Western Australia**

March 2004

DOI: [10.6084/m9.figshare.17003749](https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.17003749)



Abstract

Swan Technical and Further Education College (TAFE) situated in Perth, Western Australia is poised to commence research and development of a whole organisation short messaging system (SMS). A team of practitioners from a range of disciplines and trade areas led by mobile learning expert Alexander Hayes from the Swan Education District Office, will engage with students and other practitioners in a project comprising many differing trial types and modes of creative enterprise. The onset of handheld and wearable computing is 'shaking up' real-world occupational engagement with employers now rapidly adapting these technologies particularly in modalities where the machine-computer transactional interface can improve or speed up task completion. These technologies according to Research and Development Officer Alexander Hayes have the potential to revolutionise the way in which pedagogy is delivered 'in the hand and an always on learning as a natural extension of the classroom'.

Keywords

M-learning, mobile, pedagogy, applications, development, curriculum, industry

Introduction

The geographic isolation of Perth, Western Australia (or 'city of lights' as the NASA Space Shuttle crew coined) has often been regarded as the most advantageous factor in spurring on innovative VET practitioners. This has led to the implementation and integration of the use of mobile communication technologies within training activities. The distance factor between essential services, the strong wireless telecommunications provision and the desire to support students' retention in training and employment facilities are the key factors which researchers believe support this solid use of mobile communication in the educational context. This has been demonstrated in the past by legacy technologies including foundation CB radio contact, satellite phone use and a host of other essential service wireless transmission services.

The use of SMS messaging through handheld devices including the mobile phone in Western Australia is often touted as outstripping the use of standard landline contact, mostly evident within the 15 to 19 year old student cohort. The avid use of this communication mode is heavily relied upon by teenagers due to a variety of reasons including relative distance between landline facilities and desire for 'instant' answers. Swan TAFE, Western Australia in conjunction with the Australian Flexible Learning Framework (AFLF) conducted research in 2004 in the 'TxtMe: Supporting Disengaged Youth using Mobile Technologies' project to explore the dimensions of SMS messaging.

Swan TAFE: SMS Mobile Communication Model

This project initiative was within the Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000-2004 and was managed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group on behalf of the Commonwealth, all States and Territories in conjunction with ANTA.

The project aimed to test the hypothesis that;

"... m-learning strategies and mobile phone technology could motivate and support the retention of disengaged youth in learning programs and aid the development of lifelong learning skills through supporting collaborative, networked learning environments." *TxtMe: Supporting Disengaged Youth using Mobile Technologies (2004, p.5)*

The West Australian Youth Advantage Strategy (2004,) identified that "over 30% of

young Western Australians (who) drop out (of school) prior to completing their secondary schooling" (p.1). These figures were also mirrored in the Shaping the VET Practitioner For The Future: Rumsey Report (2002). This worrying statistic was examined by the research team in the light of what educator Marc Prensky (2003) has touted for more than a decade about engaging young people using mobile technologies.

"... The work of integrating this device which obviates the expensive hardware and software issues that come with 'bigger' computers can begin today, in those high schools and colleges with close to 100 percent phone penetration and willing teachers. There are legions of useful educational things that can be done with even the phones students already have in their pockets" ... no more, 'but the screen is too small'.... sorry digital immigrants but cell phones, not computers are the future of education (2003, p. 3).

Recommendations

The results of the 'TxtMe' project included a comprehensive set of recommendations and guidelines for VET providers, qualitative results of the m-learning trials with three separate student groups, recommendations for the establishment of infrastructure needed to support the use of m-learning in VET settings and most importantly guidelines for professional development for VET practitioners.

These project results reflect the findings of the MOBIlearn consortium in 2004 who examined mobile communication use from mobile phones through to handheld PDA's. Key implementation strategies gleaned from similar nationally and international projects has now formed the basis for further examination of the use of SMS messaging within differing academic and non-academic portfolios at Swan TAFE, Western Australia.

Conclusion

A comprehensive professional development program is now acknowledged as a core prerequisite to deployment of software that enables emailSMS using desktop PC's throughout the organization. The capacity of organizations to engage clients using mobile communication modes informed by this current research heralds possible changes in acceptable modes of information communication in a national VET context.

References

Attewell, J. & Savill-Smith, C. (2004) *Learning With Mobile: Research and Development*. MOBIlearn: Learning and Skills Development Agency. ISBN 1 85338 833 5

Department of Education and Training (2004) *Draft: Youth Advantage Strategy, Government of Western Australia*.

MOBIlearn (2003) *WP 4 Guidelines For Learning In A Mobile Environment: Version 1.0*. Mobilelearn: Learning and Skills Development Agency.

Prensky, M. (2003) *But the screen is too small...* [online] Available: <http://www.marcpransky.com/writing/Prensky%20%20But%20the%20screen%20is%20too%20small.pdf>

Rumsey, D. & Associates (2002) *Shaping the VET Practitioner For The Future West* Australian Department of Training: Government of Western Australia. ISBN 0 7307 9130 0.