



Mobile Learning via Mobile Phones: Complementing the Existing Practices in Malaysian Secondary Schools

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1. Introduction

It appears that the implementation of mobile learning for English Language learning would complement the government's vision. Firstly, there might be a possibility of complementing Malaysian schools' ICT policy through the use of mobile phones. In an effort to enhance students' learning as well as to reduce the digital divide among schools, the Ministry of Education, Malaysia has introduced a policy to deploy ICT in schools [1]. According to Meleiseia *et al.* [2], mobile phones come under the umbrella of ICT. Therefore, it might be appropriate to utilise mobile phones as another ICT tool to support teaching and learning in Malaysian schools. Previously, television, another ICT device, has been deployed in Malaysian schools [3]. Mahamad *et al.* [4] believed that it is appropriate to embrace the use of mobile phones in Malaysian schools because it could increase the student's computer access ratio. The use of mobile phones in Malaysian secondary schools might also complement the vision of Malaysian Smart Schools. From the vision of the Smart School implementation, mobile technology is a tool that was intended to be used [5].

2. Implementation

The main objective of the study is to gather opinion from the experts in education regarding the development of the implementation strategy to support mobile phones deployment in Malaysian schools. The final policy document consists of two parts: Part 1: Mobile technology integration into the curriculum; and Part 2: Policy and procedure for mobile learning implementation. Part 1 is further divided into two subsections called "Mobile lessons" and "Resourcing mobile learning". "Mobile lessons" includes suggestions regarding the content and structure of the mobile lessons. "Resourcing mobile learning" includes suggestions for providing facilities to support English Language learning through mobile technologies. Part 2 of the implementation strategy is further divided into five subsections: "Implementation model", "Acceptable use policy", "Management and maintenance", "Specific roles for supporting mobile learning" and "Support for major stakeholders". The section pertaining to implementation model includes suggestions regarding the proposed strategy for helping students acquire mobile devices. The "Acceptable use policy" covers the policies and procedures to guide students in using mobile technologies for learning. "Management and maintenance" includes the strategies for managing and maintaining the devices in the implementation. "Specific roles for supporting mobile learning" makes suggestions regarding the role of technical support, maintenance assistants and English subject leaders to support mobile learning implementation. Finally, "Support for major stakeholders" suggests approaches for supporting students, teachers and parents in the implementation. This policy and procedure are documented in a handbook entitled "Mobile learning in English Language learning: An implementation strategy for secondary schools in Malaysia" [6].

However, besides the evaluation, respondents' perspectives towards the emerging issues in deploying mobile phones are also explored. The research design is based on the Educational Research and Development (ER&D) approach by Borg and Gall [7]. This study gathered opinion from the experts in education who were identified through a purposeful sampling strategy. The experts in education consulted are English subject leaders, ICT subject leaders, head teachers and deputy head teachers from the United Kingdom and Malaysia as well as officers from the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. The study used HyperTRANSCRIBE, QSR NVivo and Inspiration based on the 3 Cs of analysis: coding to categorising to concepts, to identify the themes through text analysis and visualisations of the concepts.

In the final stage of the study, the policy and procedure documented in the handbook entitled "Mobile learning in English Language learning: An implementation strategy for secondary schools in Malaysia" [6] is disseminated and distributed to the officers in the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. In addition, the perspectives from the officers about the potential of implementing mobile learning to complement the existing practices in Malaysian schools are explored. Five officers are identified from a division in the Ministry of Education. The officers have been involved in the ICT integration in education and educational policy development.

3. Findings

The study explores the feasibility to implement mobile learning in complementing the existing practices in Malaysian secondary school. Four sub-themes are identified to explore the issue. These are ICT policy, Malaysian Smart School's vision, English Language subject support and alternative technology. The first sub-theme addresses the prospect to use mobile phones as alternative teaching and learning tool. All respondents provide positive response. The first respondent is positive that mobile phones have the potential to be another mode of learning which would extend learning outside school hours while the second respondent justifies her opinion by highlighting the benefits of using mobile phones in education. For the third respondent, although he is



positive with the affordance of mobile phones as an alternative tool, he also believes that monitoring is essential to eliminate misuse. The fourth and final respondents also identify the prospects of using mobile phones as another mode of learning. They also report that mobile phones are projected to be explored in a division in the Ministry of Education, Malaysia in the next ICT project.

The potential of utilising mobile phones to add value in the existing initiatives for English Language subject was also explored. The first respondent believes that pedagogically, mobile phones have the potential to support English Language learning in Malaysian schools. The second and third respondents are also positive and suggest embracing mobile phones in supporting English Language subject. The use of multimedia elements such as games, graphic and animations are recommended. The fourth respondent supports the affordances of mobile phones for English Language through its mobility and supporting collaboration. He also reports that mobile phones will be used in a project to support "Strengthening Malay Language, Enhancing English Language" programme in Malaysian schools. Similar to other respondents, the final respondent is also positive with the potential of mobile phones as an engaging tool in supporting English Language learning.

The potential of utilising mobile phones to complement the ICT policy in Malaysian Educational System was also explored. The first respondent is positive that mobile phone is another mode of learning which could support the policy if it is used appropriately. The second respondent comments that in addition to other ICT devices, mobile phones can be used to access the Learning and Management System in Malaysian schools in the future. The third respondent is also positive, but unfortunately does not elaborate his justification due to time constraint. The fourth respondent is inclined to introduce mobile phones for upper secondary schools students, who would be more responsible and wiser in deploying mobile phones. The final respondent stresses that mobile phones should be used in mainstream schooling as it is also an ICT device.

The final theme in the research question explores the potential of utilising mobile phones to complement the Malaysian Smart School vision to deploy mobile technologies. The first respondent believes that mobile phone is another type of mobile device which is appropriate to be used in the Malaysian Smart School. The second respondent also has the same opinion. She justifies her reason by explaining that as the pioneer in ICT integration in teaching and learning, Malaysian Smart Schools' students are suitable to use mobile phones in educational activities. The third respondent is also positive, but he has a concern regarding the challenge to acquire mobile phones because of the cost issue. The fourth respondent is also positive as he believes that the use of mobile phones will add value in complementing the vision of the Malaysian Smart Schools which are in electronic environment. The final respondent believes that the use of mobile phones will help the Malaysian Smart Schools to prepare students with digital literacy. This would eventually prepare the students to become skilful workers for the 21st century.

4. Discussion

The study established that the use of mobile phones have the potential to add value to the existing initiatives in improving English Language performance among Malaysian students. The finding supports the notion of the affordances of using mobile phones in English language learning [8][9]. The respondents agreed with the affordances of mobile phones for English language which supporting mobility, encouraging collaboration and creating engaging learning environment. The study also established that the Ministry of Education, Malaysia has a plan to launch a project to utilise mobile phones to enhance teaching and learning. The findings also established that in supporting English Language subject, the use of multimedia elements via mobile phones such as games, graphic and animations are recommended.

The study also established that the use of mobile phones have the potential to complement the ICT policy in Malaysian Educational System that encouraged the use of ICT in teaching and learning. This was similar to the opinion by Mahamad et al. [4]. Mobile phones could be used as a teaching and learning tool to support the ICT policy. Mobile phones would have the potential to be used in mainstream schooling in Malaysia as it is also an ICT device. In addition to other learning devices, mobile phones could also be used to access the Learning and Management System in Malaysian schools in the future. Mobile phones are suggested to be used by upper secondary schools students, who are believed to be more responsible and wiser in handling mobile phones.

It has also been established that the use of mobile phones will complement the Malaysian Smart School's vision to deploy mobile technologies. Mobile phones have the potential to support the Malaysian Smart School. As the pioneer in ICT integration in education, the Malaysian Smart Schools' students are suitable to use mobile phones for educational purpose. Malaysian Smart Schools are associated with electronic environment and the use of mobile phones will add value in complementing the vision. Mobile phones will help the Malaysian Smart Schools to prepare students with digital literacy and to become skilful workers for the 21st century. This supports the literature by Hague and Williamson [10], about the potential of mobile phones to support digital literacy.

Mobile phones also have the prospect to become an alternative teaching and learning tool in Malaysian schools. This was established in this study. This was similar to the findings by Siraj and Saleh [11]. Through its benefits such as supporting mobility, supporting communication between teachers and students and supporting learning activities during out of school hours, mobile phones would have the potential to be another mode of learning in mainstream education in the future. This study established that the Ministry of Education, Malaysia has a plan to explore mobile phones in an educational project in the future. The study also established that students' guidance



and monitoring is essential to eliminate misuse so that mobile phones can be used effectively in Malaysian schools.

5. Conclusion

This study has established the potential of utilising mobile phones in education to complement the existing practices in Malaysian schools. Drawing from the findings, mobile phones may have implications on the following areas: (1) adding value to the existing initiatives for English Language subject in Malaysian schools; (2) complementing the ICT policy in Malaysian Educational System; (3) complementing the Malaysian Smart School's vision to utilise mobile technologies; and (4) providing an alternative teaching and learning tool in Malaysian schools.

The study provides the opportunity to the researcher to contribute towards mobile learning knowledge in Malaysia as well as other developing countries where mobile learning is still in its infancy. From the research point of view, although the Malaysian schools have the potential to implement mobile learning, there are challenges that need to be addressed in making it a reality. However, with proper planning in complementing the existing practices in Malaysian schools, there are possibilities to embrace the potential of utilising mobile learning in mainstream education in Malaysia.

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