



MOBILE LEARNING PLATFORMS

Using the mobile phone as a learning platform can help create a sustained, supportive learning environment even beyond the classroom.

Quest Alliance is a non-profit trust working to bridge the education and skills divide by enabling self-learning for young people 10-35 years old.

Quest is fuelled by research, strengthened by partnerships and driven by innovation and technology.



How are mobile phones and learning related?

Some ways in which the mobile platform can be used to facilitate learning include:

- Being able to **access and consume educational content** outside of the classroom.
- Allowing the learners to **generate and share content** with peers.
- **Capturing learner responses** in the form of feedback or completed assignments.
- Allowing learners and educators to **communicate and collaborate** while learning.
- **Continuing the immersive process** after a course has ended.

Is there a process to be followed while developing a mobile learning platform?

While a thorough analysis and research will need to be conducted for specific learning environments, one framework to think about developing a mobile learning platform is the map of the mobile user's journey.

Initiation

- The main objective here is to create awareness about how the mobile phone can be a useful learning platform.
- The focus is on generating curiosity in the learners and supporting them into discovering value in the platform.
- For instance, showing a video on the mobile linked to the learner's curriculum can help arouse curiosity about the medium.

Participation

- The primary goal here is to trigger user action on the platform by creating a facilitative learning environment and incentivising individual participation.
- Rewarding increased engagement is an example of incentivising action.

Immersion

- The objective in this stage is to build users' commitment to the platform so that even outside the classroom they continue to use the platform.
- There is a focus on personalizing the platform to the user and creating content instead of only consuming it.
- A discussion forum, for example, can be a great way of getting learners engaged and interacting for sustained periods of time.

Continued Interaction

- The focus here is on encouraging promotion of the platform and developing it into a supportive environment even outside of the physical learning space.
- The platform at this stage should be able to provide solutions to the learner on an as-needed basis and allow a wide horizon of discovery.

What should I be wary of while introducing mobile phones in my learning context?

While the mobile phone is a powerful tool of learning, there are some precautions necessary before introducing the medium into a classroom:

- **Getting stakeholders' buy in.** Not all stakeholders, especially parents of young learners, may necessarily be convinced of the value of mobile learning. Building awareness of its potential and sharing details on how it is to be used in the classroom can help assuage doubts.
- **Mobile phones as distraction.** There is no denying that the autonomy allowed on the mobile platform can also contribute to its becoming a distraction. Interactive and engaging content and a clear value proposition to the user can help overcome this to some extent.
- **Expensive content.** Getting quality content designed or even transferring existing digital content to this platform can be an expensive proposition. Ensure that you have a clear purpose and an action plan for introducing this medium into your learning context to prevent it from becoming a drain on your resources.

- **Not a classroom replacement.** The educator figure and the shared learning space remains crucial to the learning process. The mobile platform should, thus, be seen as a way of continuing engagement with learners beyond a course.
- **Don't replicate formats that have already failed.** Individual, complex activities and test formats that have already failed learners in traditional environments should not be recreated on the mobile platform. Ensure that the content is designed with the end-user's needs in mind.

What are some limits or challenges in this process?

There can be some limits to working with the mobile platform:

- Different learners may have **different levels of familiarity** with using mobile technology.
- **Familial and societal misgivings about the impact of phone** usage can affect learner usage habits.

Is there an example of a mobile platform being successfully used in learning?

QUEST Alliance and Quicksand collaborated on a project in January 2016 to see how the mobile platform could be tapped to augment employability training among youth.

The study looked into the current challenges, learners' aspirations, study habits and goals, along with the context within which they were learning and working. The results from these were used to build insights while developing the mLearning platform that will soon be rolled out among QUEST trainees.

What are the benefits to different stakeholders in using a mobile learning platform?

Students:

- Access to engaging and interactive content for the platform.
- Means of remaining connected with peers and teachers after a course ends.
- Access to information that can be referred to as needed.

Parents:

- Means to keep learners engaged in the classroom.
- Potential solution to tracking and remaining in touch with alumni of their institutes.
- Efficient way to gather feedback and collect assignments from the learners.

“You have to strike a balance while moving to the mobile platform: it shouldn’t be a typical passive source of information, nor should it be too difficult to use.”

- Babitha George, Quicksand



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