Preparing for a Mobile Educational Future

There’s a pressing need for teacher training about mobile technologies. In fact, it’s hard to find a point more widely made in the research literature (e.g., Pachler et al., 2010; UNESCO, 2013c; West, 2012a). In the developed world we’re just starting to see a shift, with ICTs finding their way into teacher standards and national curricula (e.g., Oakley et al., 2012), and more in-service professional development (PD) courses covering ICTs; in both cases, room is increasingly made for mobile tools. In the developing world, on the other hand, it’s estimated that up to half of all teachers lack adequate training (GSMA, 2010a) – that is, general training, not just ICT training. This issue is compounded by the need to recruit millions more teachers in coming years (West, 2012a). Thus, the need for teacher training about mobile tools is part of a much larger problem – where, curiously, teacher training through mobile tools might be part of the answer.

However, it’s not just a question of more digital or mobile training, but different training. Teachers who do receive training, most of them in the developed world, often express a wish for PD which focuses less on the technology itself and more on the pedagogy of its use (Fritschi & Wolf, 2012a; Pegrum et al., 2013). As stated in the recent UNESCO Mobile Learning Week Symposium Report: ‘Technology – and perhaps mobile learning in particular – requires re-conceptualizing the role of the teacher and models of pre- and in-service training’ (UNESCO, 2013b). As we reconceptualise our training models, a pedagogical focus is crucial.

Yet it’s not enough to consider how technology can enrich pedagogy. We should also ask how it can serve literacy. Across the board, there’s a distinct lack of teacher training in digital literacies or, as the 2013 Horizon Report (Higher Education edition) calls it, ‘digital media literacy’.

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Despite the widespread agreement on the importance of digital media literacy, training in the supporting skills and techniques is rare in teacher education and non-existent in the preparation of faculty. As lecturers and professors begin to realize that they are limiting their students by not helping them to develop and use digital media literacy skills across the curriculum, the lack of formal training is being offset through professional development or informal learning, but we are far from seeing digital media literacy as a norm.

(Johnson et al., 2013, p.9)

The time has come to promote the notion of a digitally trained teacher who is also a digitally literate teacher and indeed a digitally networked teacher, and who can liaise with policymakers, educational leaders and researchers to help shape our mobile learning future.

**The digitally trained teacher**

The most commonly used model for teacher training in new technologies is Punya Mishra and Matthew Koehler’s (2006) TPACK (formerly TPCK) framework (see Figure 7.1). Here, new technologies, mobile or otherwise, aren’t treated as a separate field of knowledge, but as interlinked with content knowledge (CK) and pedagogical knowledge (PK). In other words, teachers remain content experts (who, in the case of language teachers, need a solid foundation and ideally fluency in the language they’re teaching) and pedagogical experts (who need a grasp of behaviourist, communicative and sociocultural approaches to language teaching and an associated repertoire of materials and activities). Technological knowledge (TK) serves to enhance teachers’ content and pedagogical understandings and options. Specifically, developing technological content knowledge (TCK) involves teachers becoming aware of how digital tools influence the content they may teach (such as textspeak, online reading and writing skills, or mobile literacy). Developing technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK) involves them becoming aware of how digital technologies can complement their pedagogical strategies (whether in blended or online mode).

Most teachers will begin using technology on the lower levels of Puentedura’s SAMR model (see Chapter 2) before progressing to higher levels as they build their familiarity not just with the technology, but with the ways their TK intersects with their CK and especially their PK. The outer circle of the TPACK framework reminds us that teaching must be tailored to the contexts in which it occurs. But no matter