

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON STUDENTS' MOBILE TECHNOLOGY USAGE AS LEARNING TOOL AT ALJOUF UNIVERSITY IN SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT_ *Mobile technologies in education or mobile learning (M-learning) are friendly modes of delivering education virtually anywhere using electronic devices, such as computers, notebooks, audio players, mobile phones, and tablets. It is therefore not much different from distance education. However, its role is expanding rapidly in recent years worldwide in transition to find a more effective interaction medium in the higher education system. Therefore, it is important to redefine the manner of how mobile technologies are used in the context of Saudi's educational ambiance. The main objective of this research is to investigate whether mobile technologies such as tablets, PDAs, iPads, and smartphones being used currently are useful and easy to use for instructional purposes and to what extent the students perceived mobile technologies as a self-independent learning tool and as an integration and interactive tool in classrooms. Moreover, students' usage of social networks for educational purpose was investigated. For this purpose, 114 students from the graduate diploma of education program in the first semester of 2016 participated in the study. Triangulation methods of research were applied, including questionnaire, interview, and discussion analysis. The research indicated that students were utilizing unceasingly their mobile devices in order to improve their knowledge and learning in a new way and the students indicated energetic attitude toward using mobile technology for education purposes and information sharing. M-learning apps were found to be interactive and easy to use in accessing the course content and interaction with the instructor. Several suggestions for future research directions were proposed.*

KEYWORDS: *mobile technologies; mobile learning (M-learning); E-learning; Saudi Arabia.*