

## Call for Papers and Expression of Interest Research methods in informal and mobile learning: How to get the data we really want

**14 December 2007**

**WLE Centre  
Institute of Education  
London, UK**

### **Background**

Mobile learning is often defined in terms of the technology that mediates learning: according to that definition learning with mobile technology is mobile learning. Mobility, however, is not an exclusive property of the technology, it also resides in the lifestyle of the learner, who in the course of everyday life moves from one context to another, switching locations, social groups, technologies and topics; and learning often takes place inconspicuously or is crammed in the short gaps between these transitions. Although this view of learning is inclusive of formal education contexts, it is particularly pertinent to informal learning outside educational institutions. Moreover, this view exposes the complexities of mobile learning and the related difficulties of mobile learning research.

Studies of mobile and informal learning are often based on the learners' own accounts and metacognitive analyses of their learning, by means of semi-structured interviews, surveys, and diary studies. Such retrospective accounts of

learning come with limitations, in terms of accuracy of recall and of the rationalisation or 'tidying up' that retrospective accounts may undergo. Moreover, younger learners may not possess the metacognitive skills necessary for producing adequate reflective accounts of their experiences.

Furthermore, mobile and informal learning research methods need to allow us to study not only the learning that occurs during the learning experience, but also how it develops afterwards. Learning does not result from single, individual experiences, but rather it is cumulative, "emerging over time through myriad human experiences, including but not limited to experiences in museums and schools; while watching television, reading newspapers and books, conversing with friends and family; and increasingly frequently, through interactions with the Internet. The experiences children and adults have in these various situations, dynamically interact to influence the ways individuals construct scientific knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and understanding" (Dierking et al. 2003: 109). The cumulative nature of learning makes it difficult to isolate a distinct learning event for inspection. The inherent

inconsistency of the learning practice in mobile contexts in terms of activity structure and learning outcomes (Taylor 2006) makes such inspections even more complex.

This workshop will focus on mobile and informal learning research methods in order to address:

- whether existing methods are adequate in providing us with the data we need, what is missing and how can we access it;
- what are the methodological, practical and ethical concerns with existing methods;
- how existing methods compare: in what ways are the data they yield comparable and / or complementary.

Through presentations and group discussions, we hope to arrive at a set of requirements for mobile and informal learning research methods to inform future work in this area.

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## Keynote presentations (confirmed)

Professor Mizuko Ito, School of Cinematic Arts, University of Southern California, USA; and Graduate School of Media and Governance, Keio University, Japan.



Professor David Livingstone, Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Canada.



Professor Mike Sharples, Learning Sciences Research Institute, University of Nottingham, UK.



## Venue

The workshop will take place at the Centre for Work-based Learning and Education (WLE), at the Institute of Education, London, UK. The WLE Centre is located on Level 4 of the main building of the Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1 0AL. The nearest Underground Station is Russell Square (Piccadilly Line).



## Workshop Organisers

Dr Giasemi Vavoula, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, UK.

Dr Agnes Kukulska-Hulme, Institute of Educational Technology, The Open University, UK.

Dr Norbert Pachler, Centre for Work-based Learning and Education, Institute of Education, London, UK.

Dr Palitha Edirisingha, Beyond Distance Research Alliance, University of Leicester, UK.

## Important Dates

**31 August 2007:** First call for papers.

**21 September 2007:** Expression of interest – proposed title of submission with a one paragraph description. Please send these via email to [gv18@le.ac.uk](mailto:gv18@le.ac.uk) with the subject "MIL-RM workshop".

**22 September 2007:** Second call for papers – reminder.

**15 October 2007:** Extended abstracts (1000 words) due.

**29 October 2007:** Notification of acceptance.

**2 November 2007:** Registration opens – workshop programme announcement.

**15 November 2007:** Camera-ready abstracts due.

**3 December 2007:** Registration closes.

**14 December 2007:** Workshop at WLE, Institute of Education, London.

## Registration

Registration for the workshop is free but numbers are limited. Priority will be given to authors of accepted abstracts.

The participants will be invited to a seminar to discuss the results of the data analysis.

## Presentations

Authors of selected abstracts will be invited to give a 20 minute presentation.

## Proceedings

All accepted abstracts will be available in print on the day. Presenters will be invited to submit full papers for publication in the conference proceedings either in the WLE Centre Occasional Papers Series (ISSN: 1753-3385) or as a Special Issue of the Centre's online journal Reflecting Education (ISSN 1746-9082) available to all participants and beyond.



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