Study to Initiate Mobile Learning Among a Group of Young Farmers from Kandy District: An Activity Theory Based Approach

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ABSTRACT: Mobile phones have been successfully used in agriculture information dissemination. However, there was little emphasis on how to use them in facilitating learning. This study was conducted to define the learning context, with an aim to initiate mobile learning research, in agriculture informal learning. Objectives of the study were to define the mobile learning context in relation to Activity Theory principles, to describe the present methods of communications and interactions among the study community, and to explore the limitations in the traditional non-formal learning context and possible solutions.A design based research methodology, which is informed by Activity Theory principles, was adopted to define the learning context. Members of the Young Farmer Club (YFC), Ankumbura were selected for the study, while data were collected using quantitative and qualitative methods.The availability of mobile phones was quite high (76%) among the study group, while mobile based interactions were commonly used in accessing agriculture related information. Present methods of interactions and communications among the study group were found to be inefficient, costly and time consuming. Thus, an efficient, low cost, and simple method to replace the existing systems were preferred. The need of a mobile based learning system to help gain knowledge on general agricultural practices was highlighted. Future research is necessary to develop a suitable communication and interaction system and a mobile learning system.

Keywords: Activity Theory, ICT in agriculture education, mobile learning, Young Farmer Clubs

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