

**Cell phones as an instrument for student support. The case of the University of Pretoria**

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**Mobile phones and computers**



**Appropriate technology**

**IS EMAIL NOW ONLY FOR "OLD PEOPLE"?**

"College officials around the country find that a growing number of students are missing important messages about deadlines, class cancellations, and events sent to them by e-mail because, well, the messages are sent to them by e-mail."

The article cites research reported in a 2005 Pew Internet & American Life Project called "Teens and Technology," which found that while college students still used email to communicate with their professors, they preferred to use instant messaging, text messaging, and services such as MySpace to interact with their peers.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION (vol. 53, issue 7, p. A27, October 6, 2006).

**ICT profile in the World**

- **Internet usage**
  - North America (68.1%)
  - Europe (35.9%)
  - Africa (2.5%)
- **Growth rate**
  - Africa 403.7%
  - Europe 176.1%
  - North America 108.9%
- **Digital divide**
  - Africa has fewer Internet users than France alone

**Reality in Africa**

**TECHNOLOGY PROFILE: Distance Education Students University of Pretoria**

Technology	Enrollment Cycle							
	2002		2004		2006			
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Cell Phone	1465	88.0	3126	98	5024	99		
Fax	0	0.0	262	8	687	14		
E-mail	4	0.2	23	1	419	8		
Internet access	0	0.0	12	0	115	2		

**Why the fuss about mobile phones?**

- Why on earth would you bother with text messaging?
- If the mobile phone is the only "tool" you have for communication, your mind-set regarding the importance, role and how you use it will be different.
- Africa is the ideal place to fully exploit the possibilities that mobile phones offer us in supporting our learners.
- In Africa the appropriate technology to optimise in full.

### Views on mobile phones that limit our creativity

- The mobile phone is only a telephone
- Text messaging is predominantly used by the youth
- Think that 160 characters is the full potential of SMSs
- The mobile phone is not an instrument for learning
- Are themselves 'illiterate' in the use of text messaging
- Always talk about the size of the screen

### Purpose of student support

- To make students successful in their studies
- Student support do have many faces – whatever we do to make our students more successful
- Cell Phones is just one of many instruments that is appropriate for our students

### Possibilities of the cell phone

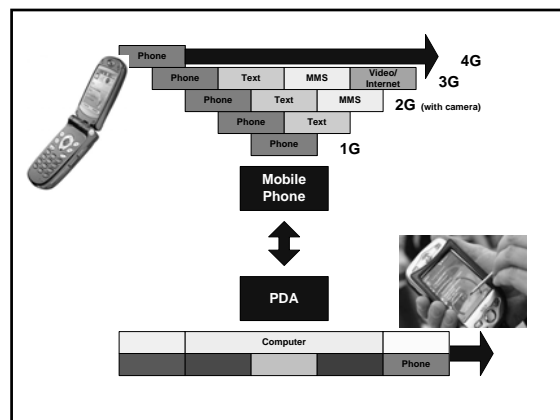


### Administrative SMS Support

Message	Group		Type of message			
	All students	Specified group	Informational/Administrative			Motivational
			Reminder	Instruction	Changes/New Information	
Dear Student. Please remember that assignment 1 must be submitted on or before 13 December 2005. Best wishes with your preparations. UP	*		*			*
Dear Student. Remember the closing date for registration for the Oct 2005 exam is 28 July. If you have not registered yet, don't delay! UP	*		*	*		
Dear Student. We wish you every success in the October 2005 exam. UP		*				*
Dear Student. Please note that the Confirmation letter of Registration for April 2005 examination will only be posted on 1 March. UP		*			*	

### Academic SMS Support

- Academic – instructional
- Quiz – interactive
- Student questions – interactive
- IVR – mini-lectures
- Lecturer response – instructional





**Future developments**

- Websites
- Memory cards
- Interactive Video Tutorials
- TV broadcasts
- Radio streaming



**SMSs can do the following**

- Direct students to important pages in the study guide
- Create the impression that the University is supporting them with their learning
- Create a perception that the lecturer is "closer" than the distance between the learner and lecturer
- Give the student the opportunity to ask academic questions via SMSs and get a response
- Listen to the lecturer giving a "mini-lecture" on a difficult concept
- Motivating the student to work diligently
- Help students to structure their studies
- Make them feel they are not alone in their studies

**Research**

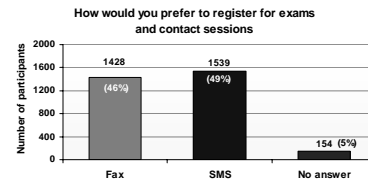
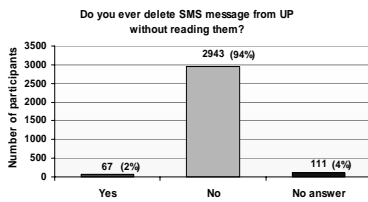
- There is a pressing need
- Traditional research methods
- Four major groups:
  1. Attitudes of students towards m/e-learning
  2. Educational applications on the mobile phone
  3. Uses of the mobile phone for educational purposes
  4. Design guidelines and model specifications for educational development on the mobile phone
- It seemed extraordinary that a technology that has clearly taken the world by storm had attracted so little rigorous research

**SMS Research in 2006**

How do you feel when you get an SMS message from UP?	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
Motivated	2662	85	18	1
At ease	696	22	198	6
Other not stated here	266	9	265	8
Worried	83	3	719	23
Irritated	19	1	758	24
<b>Total number of questionnaires</b>	<b>3121</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3121</b>	<b>100</b>

Reasons you would most like to SMS UP	Number	%
Academic matters	1125	36
Administrative matters	1996	64
<b>Total number of questionnaires</b>	<b>3121</b>	<b>100</b>

Reason you like getting SMSs from UP	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
They make you feel closer to UP	2376	76	48	2
SMSs help you to meet deadlines in our study programme	2342	75	68	2
They make you feel more motivated to study	2280	73	57	2
They help you to understand your academic programme better	1924	62	194	6
They help you to improve your marks in your studies	1279	41	553	18
Other reasons not mentioned here	869	28	468	15
<b>Total number of questionnaires</b>	<b>3121</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3121</b>	<b>100</b>



## Conclusion

- Mobile phones will not solve the ICT challenge in Africa, but with creative and innovative developments, the mobile phone will play an instrumental role in the learning environment in Africa.
- Africa is in a position to become the leader in this field because this technology is available, accessible and affordable for Africans.
- Integrating the great potential of mobile phones with the learning environment makes good common sense.

**Thank you !**

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