Needs and Policies: Dubai Classroom Narratives of Mobile Phones

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Abstract

This study questions the commonly assumed variables used for studying students' rapidly changing relationships with smartphones, particularly in West Asia. To update how we think about and study cellphone use, a narrative analysis was conducted upon students' reported cellphone experiences. Students report managing contradictions between issues of necessity, distraction, lack of control, and insufficient cultural coping, which together capture a historical moment in the tensions of culture, technology, and pedagogy that drive the dialectics of socio-cultural necessities and institutional policies. The conclusion suggests ways these findings can update the categories used to study cellphone use in classrooms.

Keywords: Mobile phones, Student behavior, Narrative Analysis, Technology policy

1. Introduction

When it comes to the issue of mobile phones in the classroom, there is no shortage of literature. In spite of the quantity of studies, for many in higher education, the matter of whether smartphones help or hinder student learning has not yet been sufficiently resolved. In looking at previous mobile phone and education studies, we see several theories being employed, and a tendency for a straightforward survey approach being used. While questionnaires provide valuable information, we were interested in going beyond the basic questions and answers that have been reported, to uncover richer insights that students have about this important piece of modern technology. By requesting student-generated unique non-fiction stories, our goal was to allow the students to tell us more about their relationship to, and use of, mobile phones on campus. This study uses the lens of uses & gratifications theory, along with a narrative analysis methodology of the student's stories to investigate the state of mobile phones on campus.

2. Nomenclature and Locale

Various terms are used to describe the gadget at the center of our study. In the U.S., use of the term "cell phone" is common, while in Singapore "hand phone" is often preferred. Germans have been known to use the term "handy," while Turks refer to it as a "pocket phone," and in Japan, it is a "keitai." In Dubai, students use different terms interchangeably, however when referring to their devices perhaps the most common referent nowadays is simply "my mobile." This way of referring to the technology leaves off the main utility that was so prominent at its inception, the voice-calling *phone* function; texting has become so much more prominent than talking -- a finding that Turkle (as mentioned in Salama, 2017) has highlighted in talks on the subject.

Mobiles have been on the scene, for sale and use, in Dubai along a similar timeline as that of most Western countries where they first appeared. In the same year as the release of the U.S. film which featured a cellphone prominently *Wall Street* (1987), UAE telecommunication company Etisalat began to offer a bulky Japanese mobile phone model to the market (Etisalat, 2011). Things have come a long way

since that time, and in the early aughts as cell phone technology advanced to the "smart phone" stage, it became common for students in the UAE to own more than one phone. By 2013, for example, many students owned two phones, often an iPhone (for the general caché of the brand), and also a Blackberry (chiefly for the secure messenger app). Even with the proliferation of secure messaging apps on the various mobile phone operating platforms, in 2019 students are still often owning two or more mobiles in their collection. This anecdotal observational evidence is supported by research indicating that the UAE leads the Middle East region in having "the highest per capita mobile phone penetration, estimated at 80.6 percent of the population" (*Smartphone usage*, 2015); also, the "UAE has the highest smartphone penetration level in the Arab states" (Ameen & Willis, 2016, p. 3) and mobile users here are "the second highest time spenders online on mobile phones" in the world (Abbas, 2016, n.p.).

3. Mobile Phones on Campus

Much has been written on the subject of cell phones in the classroom. Still, their use by students and faculty alike has not reached any state of equilibrium or consensus. For some, cell phones are the bane of higher education, while for others their use is a forgone conclusion, for others still it is a case-by-case basis for each class. Judging by the literature to date, most professors probably prefer that the phone not be used while in the classroom. While challenging to generalize, much of the research to date focuses on student use of mobile phones in the classroom, and a lot of the studies utilize a basic survey approach to get at the student usage data. Uses & gratifications theory is often seen being employed as a popular "theoretical lens" in the papers, again along with a questionnaire approach. If we can summarize, what we see is a culture (in higher education, at least) that has generally not reconciled its relationships with mobile phones.

Early studies involving mobile phones and the university, generally tended to focus on the *technology* and the novelty of the devices. One article referred to the new gadgets as representing a kind of "'technological terror' entering the classroom" (Gilroy, 2004). As smartphones proliferated, the increased affordances became more relevant (e.g., the calling function became less utilized), as well as the *content* that was being both accessed and created. Parents using cell phones to keep in touch with their kids, for example, is a popular theme in this area of the literature (Lee, Meszaros & Colvin, 2009). As the speed of the connection increased, and social media use spread, the phone as *social/cultural object* became a consideration (Malleaus & Muchena, 2015). Other studies have investigated the *effects* on users and specifically in relation to how such usage correlates with scholastic achievement and psychological well-being, for example (Aljomaa, et al., 2016; Li, Lepp, & Barkley, 2015). Much of the literature in this area can be characterized by a good/bad duality, wherein the text tends to lean in favor of, or against the use of cell phones in the classroom (Schachter, 2009; Robb & Shellenbarger, 2012; McCoy, 2013). Moreover, some of that depends on if and who is being surveyed. Studies have examined the issue of cell phones in the classroom from the teacher's perspective (Obannon & Thomas, 2014; Thomas & Obannon, 2015), others primarily survey students (Pettijohn, et al., 2015), and some survey both (Baker, Lusk, & Neuhauser, 2012; Berry & Westfall, 2015). Some studies have conducted experiments to see if cell phone use impacts students' grades: in some cases it is seen as helping (Al-Fahad, 2009; Mcconatha, Praul, & Lynch, 2008; Nickerson, Rapanta, & Goby, 2016; Tessier, 2013), while in others hurting grades (Harman & Sato, 2011; Kuznekoff, & Titsworth, 2013; Lepp, Barkley, & Kapinski, 2014). Katz and Lambert (2016) described how to engage students while removing cell phones from the classroom environment. AlShaya and Oyaid (2016) provided an overview of mobile learning in the Gulf region, and Santos (2016) reviewed the research on the increased use of mobile devices in the United Arab Emirates. In total, the

advice seems to be that unless a specific plan is in place for how to best use the mobile phones, and this is rare, mobile phone restrictions of some sort are probably advised.

4. A Note on Theories and Narrative Analysis

Due to the nature of our approach, that is to say providing students with a specific assignment to provide their unique stories involving mobiles on campus, we did not go into the research with a specific theoretical lens guiding us in a deductive way. Instead, we were interested in hearing from the students and then looking at the stories inductively – while applying a thematic narrative analysis technique along the way (Figgou & Pavlopoulous, 2015). Dubai's unique regional, sociological context to cellphone use was another reason for us to loosen our theoretical rigidity, entertain multiple possibilities, and attempt to let the responses guide us toward the most suitable theories.

Of course, it was not possible for us to conveniently forget the theories of which we were already aware. Thus, uses & gratifications theory was certainly on our minds as we considered what the student stories might tell us about the ways in which they were using their phones; the "gratifications" that certain functions might bring versus others. At the same time, we were also aware of the body of literature that indicates cell phone attachment, addiction, and dependence as a growing issue among youth. We were also mindful of the fact that third person perception might play a role if students were to discuss other students' behaviors. Researchers in multiple disciplines have been trying to develop unique theories on the mobile phone and its use ever since its inception (Geser, 2004).

For some, the examination of any text, whether oral, written or visual, qualifies as a kind of narrative analysis. The method has many varieties (Riessman, 2008). That narrative analysis is not consistently applied is both an advantage and a limitation depending on one's vantage point. The basic procedure of narrative analysis is similar among the different approaches, however, and that is that the researcher is investigating the text to discern all of the potential factors, or ingredients if you will, that are present in the text: from the format and structure of a tale to the specific words used, to the characters and their actions in the story. Further, "A good narrative analysis prompts the reader to think beyond the surface of a text, and there is a move toward broader commentary" (Riessman, 2008, p. 13). The goals again may vary slightly, but the common denominator is a desire to uncover patterns in the narratives, if any, to uncover unique instances that may not have been mentioned previously, and to see if the texts can be categorized, if that seems to make sense, given the results.

In some sense, grounded theory and its related process-oriented approach for coding data also seemed relevant (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). In particular, because we were considering the theories and methods with which we were already familiar, as well as those uncovered during the literature review, but we also wanted to be open to any that might arise as we read the student's stories.

5. The Research Questions

Our research question is "What do students think is novel and interesting about cellphone use today, and how do students understand their situation and their behaviors created by their current cellphone cultures." To answer this two-part research question, we had students answer two open-ended prompts:
   1. Tell us an interesting story of something that happened regarding cell phone use in class. It can be about you or someone else. Say something new that we do not already know.

2. Tell us one or two specific ways that you believe cell phones affect the classroom. Say something new that we do not already know.

6. Method

6.1 The Assignment

Our research objective to discover overlooked pertinent matters inspired us to design our data collection in the form of a speech assignment that put students in conversation with each other to elicit the best stories and hypotheses they find interesting about cell phones. Students were given one week to complete an assignment instructing them to prepare their best answers to our two research questions in order to present their answers in class to all of their peers. They were directed to provide enough content to give a timed 90-second speech, with 45 seconds designated to answer each question. Before presenting, students were required to submit a written version of their speech online to the instructor, which provided the exclusive data for this study. Each student filled out a template requesting their name, age, gender, nationality, year in school, and GPA, in addition to the two research questions that comprised their speech.

Students were graded on the written submission of the template solely upon its thorough completion, gaining full credit for merely following directions to fill it out as directed. For the spoken portion of the assignment, students were told they would be graded on the standard measures used in their prior four speaking assignments (body language, voice, eye contact) along with two content-specific categories of "Speechwriting Quality (following the assignment directions, thoughtful ideas)" and "Support (using specific details, being personal, giving us new perspectives)." Our aim here was to incentivize students to think perceptively while remaining careful not to bias the answers problematically for this study. These instructions were issued in class via handout and discussion of each requirement. Students received notification that any use of their answers would be confidential and anonymized. The students were also given the option to set aside their responses for "classroom-use only," in the case for whatever reason they felt uncomfortable with the information being shared.

6.2 The Participants

116 students participated in this study. 37 were male, 79 were female. All were students enrolled in one of three public speaking class sections at a liberal arts university in the United Arab Emirates. They were freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors ranging from age 18-22 with a few older students. They came from 23 nationalities, with the most common ones being Lebanese, Egyptian, Palestinian, Syrian, and Jordanian.

6.3 The Details

In an effort to clarify any ambiguities and ensure valid data, we gave and explained an additional handout during the next class session 48 hours later. It gave students additional directions. The following information was included:

Rules:
- Truth only: no fakes, no imagined stories, no googling for ideas.

- Your story can be about any classroom (high school) in any country

What if no ideas?
- Ask around: friends, family
- Use their stories. This is called "ethnographic research."

Tips on finding an interesting story. Consider:
- Your audience is a person from another culture (or alien from outer space, or old person)
- Personal Experience: something you experienced, even if no one else could observe it
- How people talk about cell phones in the classroom.
- Malfunction, no battery, forgot phone
- Faux-Pas: someone "messed up"
- How it affects your school and campus life
- How you interact with phones in class
- Your response to someone else's cell use
- Your connection with friends, family, and others
- Having multiple roles/identities in your life (e.g. side business)

7. Results and Findings

Overall results in both of the assignment questions indicated that the student narratives spoke on a single dominant context pervading their range of various answers. This dominant context will be called "the meta-narrative" because it expresses the larger narrative that encapsulates most every student response: there are assorted prohibitions on their cellphone use, and yet they must get creative to use the technology regardless. This meta-narrative appeared in question 1 through students' reported incidents created from underlying tensions between cellphone necessities and prohibitions. Question 2 disclosed this meta-narrative through their assumptions and hypotheses of cellphone effects in the classroom. Overall, answers to both questions disclosed four salient themes: 1) students must use their cellphones, even as 2) phones are distracting to everyone around, and 3) students are not in control of themselves regarding cellphone use and effects, which leads students to conclude that 4) individuals, and culture generally, should develop methods to cope with these tensions throughout West Asian cellphone culture and the classroom. A closer look at each question illustrates this meta-narrative.

For research question 1, the most common themes from students' interesting phone incidents involved creative ways students try--both successfully and unsuccessfully--to adapt their goals to classrooms norms. Students go to great lengths to circumvent prohibitions, thinking creatively and cooperatively to pursue various endeavors for their academic learning, general social lives, technological forms of fun and pranks. Teachers, accordingly, go to great lengths to enforce prohibitions, conducting searches and continually developing policies to manage the many issues cellphones create. These stories collectively showcase the many tensions between cellphone usage policies and students' necessities to use their phones. These assorted narratives constitute a dialectical pattern, with the prohibitions and usage mutually adapting to each other. Corroborating these tensions, students spoke fondly of the occasions where cellphones are incorporated into classroom procedures, such as for research and activities.

Within question 1's meta-narrative of tension between prohibition/necessity, there were four main types of narratives: accidents, distraction, cheating, and the contagion of use. Narratives of accidents involved noise, vibration, opening the wrong content, and embarrassing ringtones. Many accidents

involved a presumed privacy getting exposed. Pictures, chats, and inappropriate content were seen by unintended audiences, namely the teacher or an authority, and consequences ensued. Narratives of cellphone distraction involved the cellphone user, their peers, and the teacher suffering distinct kinds of troubles from a cellphone's distracting events. Narratives of phones used for cheating reported students failing to hide their cheating technique, getting caught, and sometimes only getting caught by peers, not the teacher. Lastly, narratives of the contagion of use attested to how commonly they use their phones when others in class do too, particularly since students use them together in groups to chat or send images.

Question 1 also contained patterns of less common stories about the phone as a social object of desire, status, and envy. Students wrote more conceptually, rather than experientially, about the practical conveniences of recording lectures or taking pictures for learning. Students found interesting the practical workarounds to policy, such as having multiple phones for when they have to hand in a phone during class, a test, or punishment. Several reports describe incidents where a student used an app to shut off the projector and, in one report, turn off the security cameras. Students clearly expressed the mixed predicament of not having their phone, which caused anxiety from the disconnection from daily necessities, and yet not having a phone was also "joyous," "nice," and cause to have "spent the whole day meeting new people to use their phones… [and] those people became my friends later on."

Some narratives were reported only once or twice but were noteworthy for their intriguingly suggestive implications, especially given the diversity of the region. These narratives included cell phones used for ESL assistance to check words, useful for getting the notifications for five daily calls to prayer, and for use as a "social blanket in awkward situations." Both men and women enjoy using their phone uniquely with regional clothing such as in a kandura sleeve (traditional male robe) or tucked inside a hijab (female headscarf) to hold the phone hands-free or cover up a wireless mic/earphone. One student suggested that "cellphones are the yearbook of all schools" for how much they already collect "memories" that can be aggregated.

Teachers and administration were mentioned to have creative deterrence policies, largely varying by the region's mores and institutional structure. In a Dubai university, one professor often requires that "if your phone rings in class, you have to answer it on speaker" and another professor issues an incentivized challenge that "everyone gets full semester-attendance marks if no one ever uses their phone all semester." One Dubai high school "is giving their students eye drops to prevent dehydration." Stories from other countries indicate the range of policies to which students are becoming accustomed. In a Nigerian high school, "if you were caught with a phone, you have to smash it with a hammer in front of the whole school during lunch." In a UAE school where phones are strictly prohibited and permanently confiscated, the principal "gets a big plastic container and fills it with water and then she asks each [student] to throw their phone in the box. None of the students could do anything about this because this was one of the school's regulations." In a boarding school in Tanzania, "we were only allowed to use our phones 3 hours every Sunday."

Question 2 solicited students' hypotheses of how cellphones affect the classroom. Student responses expressed the sentiments and projections of how students respond to this necessary part of life as it causes strife and undermines students' willed outcomes. Whether positive or negative, most responses framed their hypotheses in causal terms: the cell phone is an origin and agent of cause, while the student is its recipient who decides how to mitigate cellphones' effects. Most all hypotheses were articulated in these terms of stimulus-response at the individual level, which reproduces pervasively to become a cultural norm. These hypotheses also reflect the meta-narrative of students managing the cultural and personal tensions created between their cellphone prohibitions and their personal sentiments about their needs and wants.

Example responses expressing this cultural rift include how students want education to be engaging – so as to avoid the temptation of the cellphone's always-accessible engagement. Students like and want phones incorporated into the curriculum because phones are used everywhere else, and the students feel competent to fulfill such tasks even as they claim to be distracted and lack self-control using cellphones. Students express that teachers should be engaging enough that students *should not have to fight the urge* to use the phone.

The most salient examples of a personal rift were students' unwanted "dependency" from the various ways in which "we all must use our phones." Students generally feel not in control of their phone habits, citing temptation, impulsivity to respond, urges all the time when possessing a smartphone. Students write about how their mood and mind are readily affected by what they see when they check phones. Feelings of dependency and loss of control are part of a common "struggle of power and authority between teacher and student." Students' experiences have seen two sides of this struggle, which can make the teacher-student relationship either closer and friendly or more distant and antagonistic.

The responses ranged between positive or negative effects, yet most all exhibited consensus in the belief that other people think phones are detrimental and distractive. Across the data, overall student sentiment fits into four categories:

- Having phones in class is bad ("distractive," "disrespectful," "less focused in general," and motivation to work is eclipsed by phones' instant temptations).
- Having phones in class is good ("helps learning," "more enjoyable," "develops tech-management," "develops multi-tasking skills," socializes the learning process).
- Having phones in class is a mixture of good and bad together ("depending on how they are used," "depending on the conscientiousness brought to them", "depending on the professor", "Students use phones less when given a valid reason why not to", "phones make us lazy, but it's easier").
- Having phones in class requires responsibility, education, etiquette from the individual to manage their effects.

Students' frequent mentions about distraction convey how they view it as a complex, often contradictory, love/hate matter. They embrace and disparage distraction. They love its pleasures and possibilities while acknowledging its simultaneous detriments. Students disclose nuanced shades of "distraction" in proportion to the act's relevance to academic success. They have notions of what they *should* be attending to, how particular cellphone uses are *valued or devalued*, and what their *idea of quality education* looks like. They explain how phones can be nice to have in class (e.g. phones cure boredom, they can be useful to learning), yet at the same time, they find class more enjoyable when others' phone use is not distracting them or the teacher. Students feel that distraction is maximized when phones are present, and phones make us less patient and cultivate a low tolerance for idle time. Students differentiate between distraction from the phone itself versus from the actions surrounding the phone as well as between visual distraction and auditory distraction. Students speak of distraction in terms of impulsive stimulus/responses that are automatic without mention of the possibility of resistance. Yet, they frequently feel responsible for not doing so ("we should be mature enough to recognize the right time and place to use it") and acknowledge the many ways in which phones make teachers lives harder.

Students express the anxieties within these matters. Students have anxiety of losing their phone, losing access/permission to use their phone, having it confiscated, not having a good phone, breaking their phone, not locking their phone, having private content exposed, being affected in class from what may come through their phone at any time (e.g. social drama, news of a death), and so on. Further anxieties come from various ways in which phone use affects how people perceive each other, especially how the teacher perceives a student and vice versa. Other phone uses in the classroom purportedly ease anxieties, such as how "listening to music helps students focus."

Perhaps the clearest, simplest certainty among the complexities is phones' important utility as a notification device for emergencies. Students who attended schools in war zones mentioned phones' necessity for safety, transportation through dangerous zones, and updating family locations. Other students report someone they know having been saved from disaster due to a notification warning through their phone. This notification use of phones has also been useful coordinating students through class cancellations, room changes, last minute changes, and students coming late to final exams, which are often at a different time than class.

Some hypotheses were reported only once or twice but were noteworthy for their suggestive implications, especially given the diversity of the region. These include the physicality of repetitive use, such as headaches, neck pain, eyes sore or dry, not sleeping, hand/finger/thumb pain, concern about screen radiation. Students are more easily late to class due to phone's preoccupying them, losing track of time. Phone express class distinctions, as fancier phones create envy and markers of have/have-not notions. People walk differently due to phone use. Students get less sleep due to phone use at night and are habitually checking the screen throughout the night. There is uncertainty as to whether students' habits caused by smartphone culture are "lazy" or simply the new normal for the smartphone age.

One illustrative account of a female's hypotheses linked phones and depression:

> "I believe that mobile phones effect [sic] us in a way that makes us depressed, ive [sic] noticed that whenever I'm at my lowest moods its [sic] always when I'm attached to my phone. the more I'm on my phone, the less I'm up doing something positive to clear my mind like taking a walk outside for fresh air or cleaning or even cooking. people our age mostly overuse the smartphones mainly because of social media, social media's presence is depressing because all we do is look at pictures and read gossip that make us feel bad about ourselves. and whenever I'm feeling depressed id skip my classes, id pay 0 attention in class since my mind will be elsewhere, id [sic] be a slacker and id be behind in my classes."

In accordance with the instructions of the student assignment, students avoided cliché and ubiquitous topics from popular discourses on cellphone effects. The following topics appeared in three or fewer instances: bullying, phones making us more alone/isolated, less sense of self, depression, girls and body image, phones practical functionalities (e.g., replacing paper notebooks, calendar, faster communication with teachers, alarms to remind you, backs up info), posting without permission, online reputation management.

A summary of our key findings may be exemplified by three particularly representative responses:

> "I believe cellphones affect the classroom in a negative way. Why? In my opinion cellphones are like air to people nowadays. Why am I comparing to air? Well air is a need people need in order to survive and cellphones have that function in their lives now. Cellphones became a need and not paying attention to it 24/7 is something taboo. People are constantly on their phones and it became an addiction and a need to survive. People nowadays feel the need to keep up with whatever is going on on social media because they feel like they'd be missing out on the smallest things. That is why students in classrooms find a hard time letting go of their phones during class time and that affects their attention and lowers the amount of knowledge they're getting throughout the class."

And yet:

> "We are much more creative. Let me tell you why that is, 1st, we have discovered a 1000 and 1 ways to smuggle our phones in the class to help us "do group work" in exams which I won't mention how so that I don't ruin our secret student techniques or the creativity in the secret

coding we come up with when we CAN'T use our phones. That is confidential information that I can't disclose. Creativity in manipulation, we can make teachers actually believe we know what it is we are talking about, 3 secs to google on the down low, boom. Participation grades and how we make them believe that we are actually good at multitasking. They catch us on our phones, teacher asks you to repeat what it is you said and you instantly got your bro texting you keywords and you make up a coherent sentence, you sold it and boom you're good to go. If that isn't creativity I don't know what is."

Thus students understand themselves dealing with the paradoxes and contradictions of current cellphone culture. This requires constant adaptation and creativity, but also lying:

"I believe that using cell phones on campus or in the classroom specifically makes us lie frequently. When people use their mobiles in the classroom they often use it, to text, as a way of entertainment, or to find answers; and in all these situations we somehow lie. If you're texting someone that is from your family or even a friend, you'll most probably lie that you're not in class. Or if you are using the phone to cheat answers in an in-class assignment or a quiz you're lying to the professor and even your family about the grades that you are getting. Also, people use cellphones in campus every day to exchange to spread news and usually one out of all of them is a lie. Furthermore, people usually go to school or university to get an education, but when people use their phones during classes, they are lying to themselves that they are there to learn, because clearly they aren't."

8. Discussion and Conclusion

This project intends to refresh scholars' assumptions about the terms and categories used in studying students' media use. Our grounded theory approach to uses and gratifications presented open-ended questions to solicit 234 responses that comprise a constellation of cellphone stories, tensions, and relevancies to the classroom. Our synopsis of these responses aims to provide a plethora of ideas that can invigorate and reorient subsequent media studies to the particular shape of phenomena in the current state of media technology, educational policy, and regional cultures.

We see in the students' narratives evidence supporting Ling and Donner's consideration of the mobile phone as "a symbol of the modern and the post-modern, of individual autonomy and social connectedness, of independence and collective action" (2009, p. 107). In their book on mobile communication, they also observed that "The student can be attending a lecture while covertly arranging to meet with friends via SMS" (2009, p. 141); based on our results, it turns out they are now, perhaps, of course, doing much more. We were able to elicit responses that provided valuable insights into how the students view these devices and the different contemporary uses they had for the mobile phones.

These student responses are authoritative of a particular kind of "user's knowledge" about students' sense of everyday experience and about the terms in which they understand themselves. These narratives provide insight to students' immediate experiences that are propagated, and sometimes created, by the language used to understand themselves. For example, students continue to speak of their "phones," which is technically an outdated misnomer for the rapidly evolving technology and resulting issues they have to manage. Such mismatched language suggests potential actions, such as changing its name to help students, teachers, and administrators more accurately think about how to align classroom policy with the novel media challenges students face. It may also help realize students' desire for culture-wide agreements on better "phone etiquette," which would likely progress more with terms updated from "phone" and "etiquette" (e.g., media harmony, tech balance, etc.).

Mobile, cell, smart or hand phone, regardless of one's preferred terminology, this new technology has had and continues to have, a profound impact on society. This technology is now found in every walk of life. For the Dubai campus environment, nearly all students have multiple handsets. While we are gaining a better understanding of their use of these devices, we are still collectively working towards what this will mean in the long run, as both the users and the technology mature.

This study has added to a growing body of literature on mobile phone use in West Asia, offering unique insights by focusing on a specific group of users, undergraduate students in a campus context in Dubai. At the same time, this study contributes to the larger global corpus of literature on mobile phone use more generally. Understanding students' "user's knowledge" is valuable for further scholarship about 1) a basis for intervention in the classroom, such as designing curricula and policies that fit with students' worldviews and thus are more likely to be followed, 2) clues to how popular understandings of technology circulate in student populations in West Asia (e.g., what ideas about the cellphone reach them, where/how they get their ideas about technology, etc.), 3) the ongoing variety of attitudes toward cellphone technology as it evolves. The results and findings capture a historical moment in the tensions of culture, technology, and pedagogy that are driving the larger dialectics of institutional policies and cultural necessities.

The issue of students and cell phones on campus is fascinatingly complex, and one on which there is no clear consensus -- and the literature tends to contribute to this confusion. Perhaps only time will tell if a definitive consensus may ever be achieved, and this may depend somewhat on changes with technology - as well as the evolving uses that students continue to devise for the devices. Until then, researchers must continue to investigate and explore the uses of mobile phone technology for its users around the world.

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