**The NMC Horizon Report: 2012 Higher Education Edition. Austin, Texas: The New Media Consortium**.

**Horizon Report, Mobile Apps**

The Horizon NMC report on mobile apps paints the picture of a fast evolving dynamic sector with millions of existing apps and hundreds of new ones released every week, some of these are specifically designed for roles in higher education, while many others could be used in various tasks, such as extending learning outside of the classroom (Abilene Christian University Case Study, 2011). The role of prior learning is one that could be explored here, with mobile apps enabling the provision of pre course materials, facilitating the development of platforms which allow students readily accessible information and pre course activities and subject materials, enhancing placement and improving successful outcomes. The article clarifies that the best apps are those that are tightly integrated with the capabilities of the device, making use of the sensors and software capabilities of the smartphone, such as cameras, GPS, and embedded sensors, therefore offering the most versatile and productive capabilities. The popularity and rapid development characterizing the domain of mobile applications is in no small way spurned on by the move away from expensive memory acquisitive integrated software suites to specific standalone applications that can be downloaded quickly onto smartphones is helping to drive and develop the spread of mobile applications (NMC. 2012).

The article omits to explain that often the main hindrance to successfully incorporating apps into specific roles in education and learning is that finding the right app can feel like searching for a needle in a haystack. The development of an app bank similar to that created at the Tennessee Board of Regents, “With a bank of 40,000 educational apps that have been catalogued, reviewed, and approved, the Tennessee initiative hopes to make it easier for educators to use apps in the classroom and beyond” (Fuhrman, T. 2012). A similar app bank customised for the Irish educational sector would, I believe help educators save time and resources by streamlining relevant apps.

The article discusses the massive number of apps downloaded, and ties this into growing popularity of this domain, comparing it with the seismic changes that have occurred recently in the music, publishing and retail business, but it neglects to discuss that many of the apps that come with devices are never used, also many are downloaded and never used, and how many are deleted. Of the myriad number, type and functionality of apps offered on the average smartphone, only a select few may ever be used.

On the positive side the article provides a useful list of mobile applications that are being developed or, are in use in the higher educational sector. There is an exploration of an exciting application development course which was established at Vanderbilt University, in 2009 by their Mobile Application Team, the aim of the course is to train students to be able to create, and successfully market their own apps, to this end the program has been quite effective, the participants have already developed three award winning apps. Another example of the effective incorporation of mobile apps in teaching and learning environment is the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where the School of Journalism has integrated app development into a magazine publishing class, appreciating that mobile devices are taking on a noticeable role in the magazine industry. The article further emphasis how the higher education sector is progressing this trend, it gives the example of the Ohio State University’s mobile app which comes with a campus directory, library resources and student personal information which is accessed by student I.D. Another popular app discussed is called “Good Reader” this enables students to highlight, annotate, sketch, and add footnotes to e-books, helping them to make the transition from printed media. “JotNot Pro” is another app that is considered it allows college staff to digitally distribute course documents, enabling students to instantly scan printed documents and store them on their device.

There are a growing number of applications that are especially relevant to the development of teaching Science and Maths, some of these are apps that combined with imbedded sensors deal with the sensing of data, and for example those that extend the uses of the camera and sensors on the device that are involved in location data and motion detection. Specific apps that are used for integrating apps into Maths teaching are MyCalculator, Wolfram Alpha, Math Terms, and Instapaper (Fuhrman, T. 2012).

**Reference:**

Abilene Christian University Case Study, 2011. Mobile Learning Report 2010-11

Fuhrman, Toni. *Curating the World of Educational Apps.* 2012. Campus technology. 1105 Media Inc.

NMC Horizon Report: 2012 Higher Education Edition