



**International HETL Conference, Orlando, Florida,
January 13-15, 2013**

**Toward Mobile Technologies: A tool for Improving
Student's Engagement and Feedback in Large Class
(University of Venda case study)**

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1. Introduction

- After a decade of fast increase in the South African higher education system, the number of students have grown significantly in many courses.
- Larger classes pose significant teaching challenges, not least in the assessment.
- A major difficulty in teaching large classes is finding ways to provide feedback to and receive it from students.



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1.1 Use of mobile technologies among student population

- In the 21st century, mobile technologies offer a way to create dynamic and interactive learning environments inside and outside the classroom.
- Many Studies done revealed that 96 percent of students own a cell phone and nearly 70 percent of those phones have Internet capabilities.
- Generally speaking, by saying mobile technology we mean all mobile devices that include the recent generation of 3G, mobile phones, smart phones, iPhone, iPods etc.



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1.2 Student's engagement

- Nowadays in higher education institutions, engagement has become a catch-all term most frequently used to illustrate behaviors characterizing students (Krause, 2005).
- Some researchers defined engagement in terms of interest, effort, motivation, time-on-task, the period of time in which students are completely focused on and participating in the learning task, and academic achievement (Bulger, et al., 2008).
- How can I get my students engage?



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1.3 *Students feedback*

- Feedback is a key element in quality learning and creating an environment that encourages learner's reflection and improvement.
- It can also be used to monitor students progress, control the pace of learning, and evaluate teaching strategies.
- Providing collective or individual feedback to students in large classes has become a big challenge.
 - *Number of students*
 - *Lack of interest*
 - *Attitude of the students*



2. Background

- Foundation Information Technology (FIT 1540, a foundation course offered at university of Venda) is a module that develops familiarity with modern computers and encourages their productive use.
- The course has no prerequisites; it is designed for those with little or no prior computer background.
- One objective of the module is to provide students with computer skills, understanding and confidence to use the hardware and software that they will need in their education or professional development.



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2.1 Problems

- Several lecturers who have taught a class containing more than 120 students understand the challenges of the large-enrollment atmosphere.
 - ✓ Feedback
 - ✓ Engagement
 - ✓ Communiqués for time table change, cancellation of a test, class etc.
 - ✓ Corrections for semester marks or tests marks in the end of the semester
 - ✓ Lack of infrastructures (Computer Lab, new technologies tec.)

The above issues poses a big challenge in larger classes.



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2.2 Solution

- Goldstuck (2010) reports that for 450 000 users, cell phones are their primary form of access to the Internet.
- Two youth marketing agencies (Student Village & Interact RDT) shows that 78% of SA students access the internet via their cell phones.
- The Kreutzer study in poor schools was even more revealing: 93% of the Grade 11 learners reported having used the internet on cell phones (ever), with 68% using their phones for internet access on a typical day, opposed to 39% of those using computers (Kreutzer 2009).
- This is why we made a shift by integrating cell phones use to access the Facebook blog



3. Methodology

■ Location

University of Venda Thohoyandou South Africa

■ Participants

A sample of 150 participants all students at the foundation level, in which 70% were female and 30% male.

■ Research Instrument

An evaluation questionnaire was designed and given to students (sample of 150)



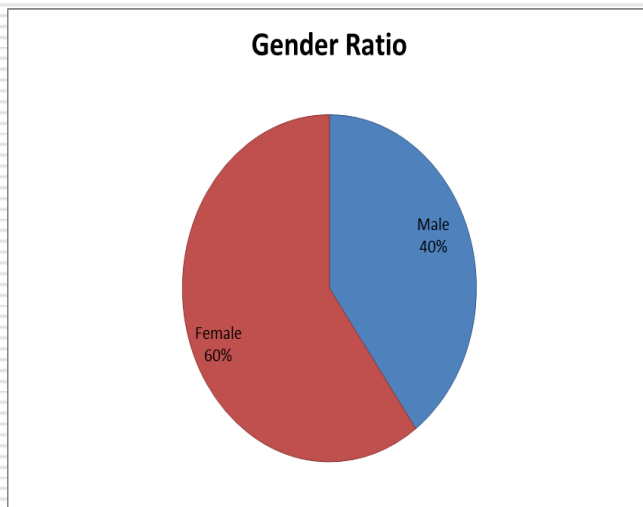
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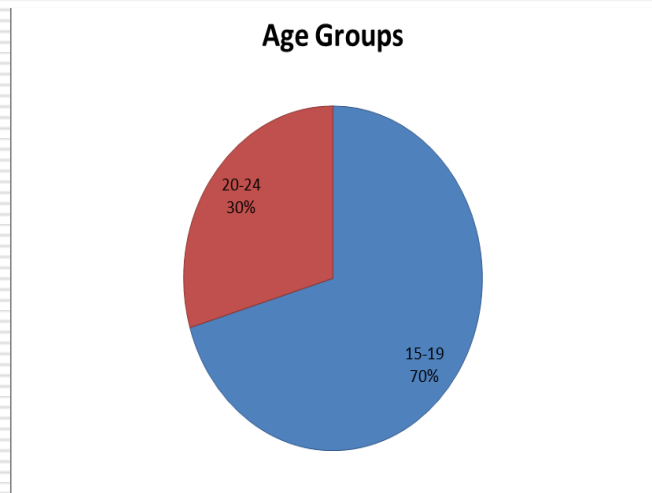


4. Research results and discussion

- The result was based on the data collection that was made among foundation students.
- This result was analyzed in various sections



Distribution of Male and female students



Participants ages group



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4. Research results and discussion...

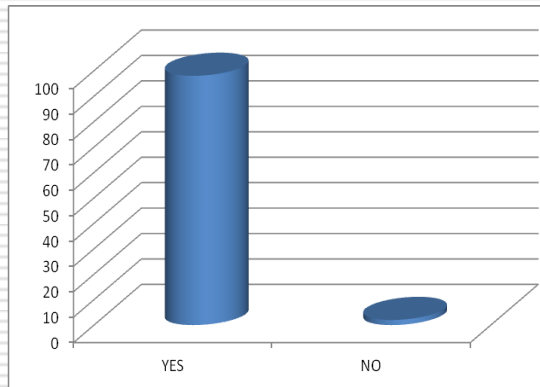


Figure4: People having mobile phone

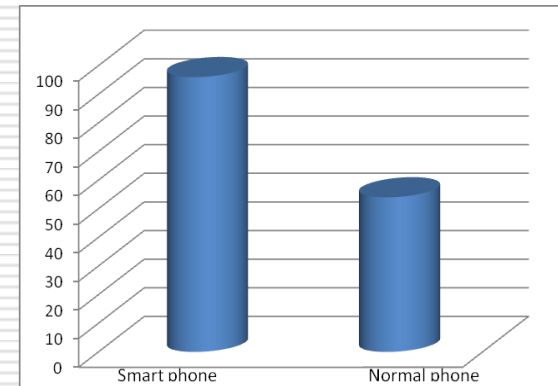


Figure5: Smart phone vs Normal phone

The data below shows that 99% of the classroom had a mobile phone and 71% of those devices are smart phone with capabilities of accessing the internet.



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4. Research results and discussion...

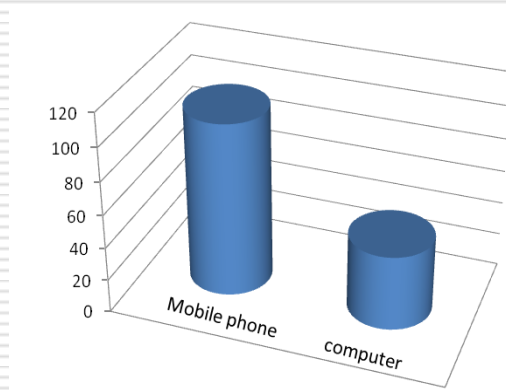


Figure7: Internet access

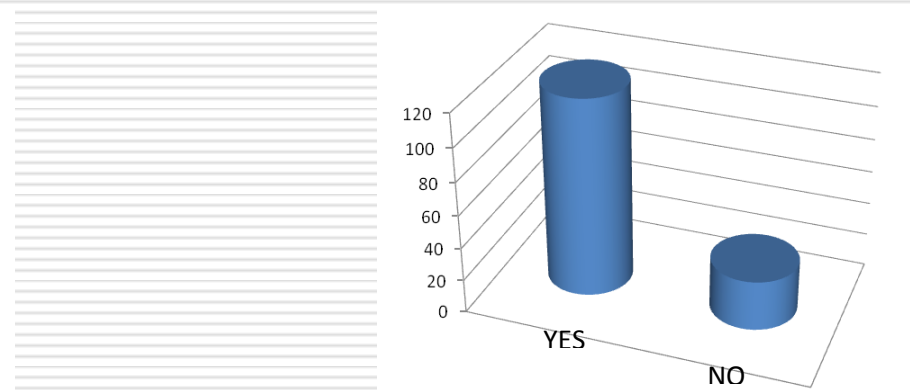


Figure6: People having Facebook account

Basically 70% of the participants use their mobile devices to access the internet

the data shows that 80% of the participants as a Facebook account and 20% do not have



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4. Research results and discussion...

How often do you use your mobile phone for FIT 1540/1640 Facebook blog?

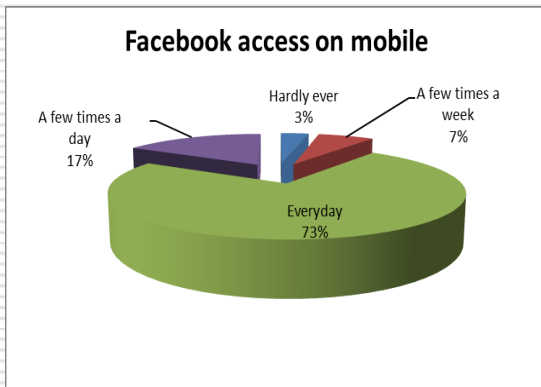


Figure8: Facebook access on mobile

Have you ever got a feedback from your Lecturer?

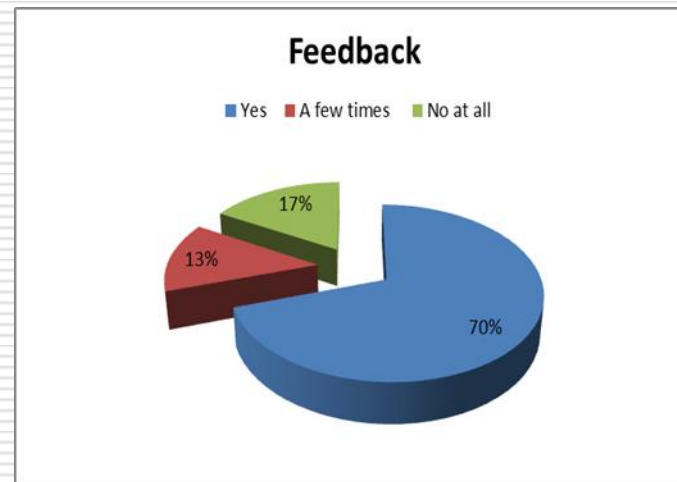


Figure10: Feedback from the Lecturer



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4. Research results and discussion...

Have you ever inbox or posted to other students or Lecturer in FIT 1540/1640 Facebook blog using you mobile phone?

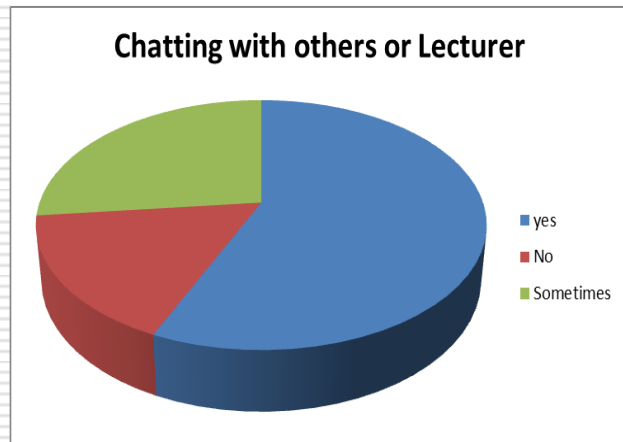


Figure9: Chatting with others or Lecturer

Result displays 57% manage to chat to other students and the lecturer, 27% sometime use to do that and 17% never done that.



5. Attitude of the students

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Was the information in our facebook blog helpful to you in this module by using your phone	17%	70%	7%	8%
2. The use of mobile help you to interact and get feedback from the lecturer	7%	80%	10%	3%
3. The FIT 1540/1640 Facebook blog was it helpful using your phone	2%	85%	2%	11%
4. I find it easy to communicate with the lecturer and other students using your phone	5%	82%	13%	5%
5. I was engage and inform about module with my mobile in and outside the classroom	4%	83%	3%	14%
6. It will be good to use this technology for other module	7%	80%	4%	13%



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6. Conclusion

- We are living in a digital age where instructors have to learn to communicate in the language and style of their students.
- This doesn't mean abolishing the significance of what is central, or of good rational skills but to get students more engaged in a specific course.
- The result showed that the use of mobile phones to access our Facebook blog, helped students to engage with peers, lecturer and get effective feedback from the lecturer.



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