Wireless Web Kids
Mobile Learning in Primary And Secondary Education

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Abstract:

Wireless Web Kids (WW-kids) is an approved project with financial support of the Flemish government, Economics Department. The project started in December 2007 and runs till December 2010. Main purpose is to motivate children for studying sciences and technology. In Belgium there is a lack of students studying engineering, physics, chemistry, biology, technology and informatics. The project aims to enlarge the knowledge of children in primary and secondary education in the field of ICT in general, and new technologies as mobile devices for learning in particular. In the project students will learn and study with WEB 2.0 applications, using mobile devices. After the project children will have a clear inside how mobile devices can contribute to learning and working. The project is supported by companies and research units of the University of Hasselt.

1 Background of the project

Due to the fact that not enough students choose for studying exact sciences and engineering, companies face a shortage of labour forces. The Flemish government wants to solve the problem by financing special projects from universities and their research units to work out special programs or projects that encourage students to choose for exact sciences and engineering. The project wants to popularize sciences. Nowadays exact sciences and technology have no special motivation anymore for younger people. Professions as information scientist are seen as boring, working lonely behind a desktop. In reality these professions have made a real change last years. Information scientists have also to have organizational and communicational skills. Through visiting companies, universities and research units and having contacts with workers and researchers the project hopes children get motivated for these professions. The project hopes for a positive influence in the study-choice of children and pupils in secondary, higher education and university studies.

2 The project

2.1 Organization of the project

Secondary education pupils (16-18 years) will develop whispering stories about some important cultural, historical characteristics of their own environment, like e.g. in our own region, the evolution, ending with the closing, of the coal mines. This interactive whisper
story is a kind of an informative search in a region using mobile devices, like pda, i-pod, i-phone, … to give information about the history, geography, nature and culture of the region. The search will be organised in a competition. By visiting the region (by walking or biking) children will get questions and by search immediately online in Wikipedia and elsewhere they have to find answers, that will have to be sent back immediately.

With the support of companies and the university of Hasselt, last grade students in secondary education will develop the whisper stories and implement them ingps-editors. While the project runs the students can publish their results, impressions, reflections, … on Hasselt-Lokaal, the online version of the regional newspaper. The contacts with researchers, employees in companies, journalists, … will hopefully give the students impressions of the new aspects of these professions and can motivate them for choosing studies that leads to these professions. With children of primary education the whisper stories, secondary education students made, are done with the main goal to confront very young children (10-12 years) with new technologies. The aim is to inspire them with the possibilities of new media, like i-pod, i-phone, pda.

The approved project got the necessary funds for buying the needed hardware. Additional hardware is available through the cooperation and support of companies and the university of Hasselt.

2.2 Learning elements

The students discover WEB 2.0 tools and applications, and how these technologies are made and can be used. Developing a whisper story with pda, i-pod and i-phone asks for organizational skills for a real project, in which actual tools as iGoogle, Netvibes, Zoho-projects will be integrated. These tools are already used in real business-contexts.

For primary education the focus lies in using the interactive whisper story. The project starts for this target group with an explanation – appropriate for their age – about the basic principles of the used soft- and hardware. The accent lies on the functionality and on the use.

The core learning elements are about ICT-technology: especially multimedia and informatics. Other learning domains are history, geography, economics, and biology. These learning domains are integrated in the whisper story and the questions pupils get about.

Language is also an important domain that is part of every profession these days. Therefore Concentra was asked to be a partner in the project. Concentra is de editor of a regional newspaper but also has a very good online version, called Hasselt-Lokaal. Pupils get the possibility to make reports about the project and publish them online.

3 Conclusions

The WW-Kids-project wants to contribute at the popularisation of sciences and technology. With students from last grade in secondary education whisper stories will be made with mobile devices. Pupils from primary education will do the project with the whisper stories, their “colleagues” in secondary education made. The cooperation with companies, university and newspaper is essential. Main goal is to motivate students – from already a very young age – for studying exact sciences and technology. In a later phase of the project it will be researched if this project can have a European dimension.
References:


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