LONG ABSTRACT

African Youth and Mobile Phones/Mobilities: Piloting Guidelines For Responsible Mobile Phone Use By Pupils/Students And Teachers In Ghanaian Schools

[1]Abane, A. M., [2]Tanle, A. [3]Owusu, S. A., and [4]Asamoah, Y.

1. Professor, Department of Geography and Regional Planning, UCC
2. Associate Professor, Department of Population and Health, UCC
3. Research Fellow, Directorate of Research, Innovation and Consultancy, UCC (Corresponding author)
4. Lecturer, Department of Geography Education, University of Education, Winneba

Studies have highlighted ways in which mobile phones have supported teaching, learning and research. Pupils/students use the device for some purposes relating to learning, while teachers use them as teaching/learning materials, for research and to access opportunities for training and progression. Nonetheless, if unregulated, mobile phones could be subjected to abuse. Hence, guided by the Technology Acceptance Model, this pilot study was implemented to investigate how a developed Responsible Mobile Phone Use Guideline would be accepted and mainstreamed into pre-tertiary educational institutions for quality teaching and learning. Approvals were sought from the related Ghana Education Officials after which 15 diverse pre-tertiary schools (primary, junior high, senior high, day/boarding, rural/urban) were selected to participate in the intervention study. Orientation sessions were organised for the heads and teachers of all the 15 selected schools to promote a full understanding of the contents of the guideline, posters and benefits of mobile phone use in educational contexts.

After two terms of piloting the guidelines during the second and third terms of 2017/2018 academic year, the Concurrent Triangulation Strategy of mixed-methods was employed to purposively sample the 15 headteachers for in-depth interviews and a simple random sampling procedure for 261 student/pupils and 74 teachers for end-of-pilot evaluation. The pupils comprised 37 Primary and 51 Junior High School pupils as well as 173 Senior High School students. In all, 147 were males and 114 females (Table 1). Most of those captured in the survey were SHS students (107 males; 66 females). In terms of age, the majority of both the male (62%) and female (38%) pupils/students were 16-20 years old.

Table 1: Background Characteristics of Pupils/Students

Characteristics	Male		Female		Total	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Educational level						
Lower Primary	5	55.6	4	44.4	9	100.0
Upper Primary	14	50.0	14	50.0	28	100.0
Junior High School	21	41.2	30	58.8	51	100.0
Senior High School	107	61.8	66	38.2	173	100.0
Total	**147**	**56.3**	**114**	**43.7**	**261**	
Age						
<11 years	5	62.5	3	37.5	8	100.0
11—15 years	34	43.7	44	56.3	78	100.0
16—20 years	108	61.7	67	38.3	175	100.0
Total	**147**	**56.3**	**114**	**43.7**	**261**	

Source: Field Survey, December 2018

The male teachers were generally older with 81% aged 31 years or more compared to 80% of the female teachers who were all aged 30 years or less. A higher proportion of the female teachers (87%) than the male teachers (81%) had tertiary education. The data further showed that about 53% of the male teachers compared to only 7% of their female counterparts had been in service for 10 or more years.

Table 2: Background Characteristics of Teachers

Characteristics	Male (%)	Female (%)
Age (years)		
21-25	5.1	50.0
26-30	13.6	30.0
31-35	15.3	0.0
36-40	20.3	6.7
41-45	23.7	6.7
46 or more	22.1	6.7
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**
Highest Level of Education		
Basic school	5.1	0.0
Senior High School	3.4	0.0
HND/Diploma	10.6	13.3
Tertiary	81.3	86.7
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**
Teaching Experience (years)		
0-5	28.8	46.3
6-10	18.6	47.0
11-15	16.9	0.0
16-20	23.7	6.7
21-25	10.2	0.0
26 or more	1.7	0.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, December 2018

As part of the process of evaluating the impact of the pilot, pupils/students were asked if they had sighted the posters that were developed within their school environment. The returns showed that 86% of male and nearly 94% of the female pupils/students had seen the posters. Similar proportions of both groups claimed to have clearly understood the messages (males 99%; females 97%). They also overwhelmingly stated that each message was important in terms of what they should be doing in school (89% males; 97% females). As with every new policy, however, some people will take time to accept change (laggards) while others easily embrace it (early adopters). It was not surprising that a few of the pupils/students (16 males; 4 females) said they did not see the posters as important to them. Such pupils/students would require further orientation. This is particularly so as the majority of their colleagues indicated that the posters were good because they were designed to prevent phone use during classes (70% males; 61% females), discourage negative phone use in school (18% males; 25% females) and ensure overall responsible use of the phone (12% males; 14% females) (Table 3).

Table 3: What the Posters Sought to Achieve among students/pupils

Response	Male		Female		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Prevent phone use	88	59.9	66	57.9	154
Discourage phone use	22	15.0	27	23.7	49
Ensure responsible phone use	15	10.2	15	13.2	30
Other	1	0.7	1	0.9	2
No response	21	14.2	5	4.3	26
Total	**147**	**100**	**114**	**100**	**261**

Source: Field Survey, December 2018

Very high proportions of both the male (81%) and female (80%) teachers reported that the messages on the posters had motivated them to stop using phones in class (Table 4).

Table 4: Influence of messages on posters on mobile phone use in class

Use of mobile phone in class	Sex	
	Male (%)	Female (%)
Motivated me to stop phone use in class	81.3	80.0
Use only as teaching/learning material in class	8.3	0.0
Prevented pupils from using phones in class	8.3	20.0
Parents stopped giving phones to their wards	2.1	7.1
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, December 2018

Specifically, on how the guidelines had impacted on their work, an Assistant Headteacher in charge of Administration in a Senior High School (SHS) and a Head Teacher of a Basic School expressed their satisfaction with the project as follows: *It has (impacted on our work). The rate at which they (teachers) were receiving calls during class hours has reduced. For instance, now that these things are there (posters), they serve as reminders to them. All the nineteen teachers in this school have signed the agreement form without any protest. We have also informed the pupils about the introduction of the guidelines so they are no longer bringing mobile phones to school/classroom. It will even interest you to note that other colleague head teachers have requested for copies of consent/agreement forms.*

The results of the interaction with pupils/students as well as teachers and heads of the schools have generally shown that with good monitoring and supervision, phone use will no longer be a challenge to teaching/learning in class and that teachers will spend full contact hours with their pupils/students. Heads of the schools involved see the guidelines as reminders to teachers and pupils/students to behave responsibly in class. The call by both pupils/students and the teachers to assist them to sustain the project and to scale up the exercise to a national level is welcoming.