MOBILE LEARNING MODEL FOR ZIMBABWE HIGHER EDUCATION

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1

Contents

Introduction → Background → Research Gap → Research outcomes → Research Method → Proposed model → Conclusion

2
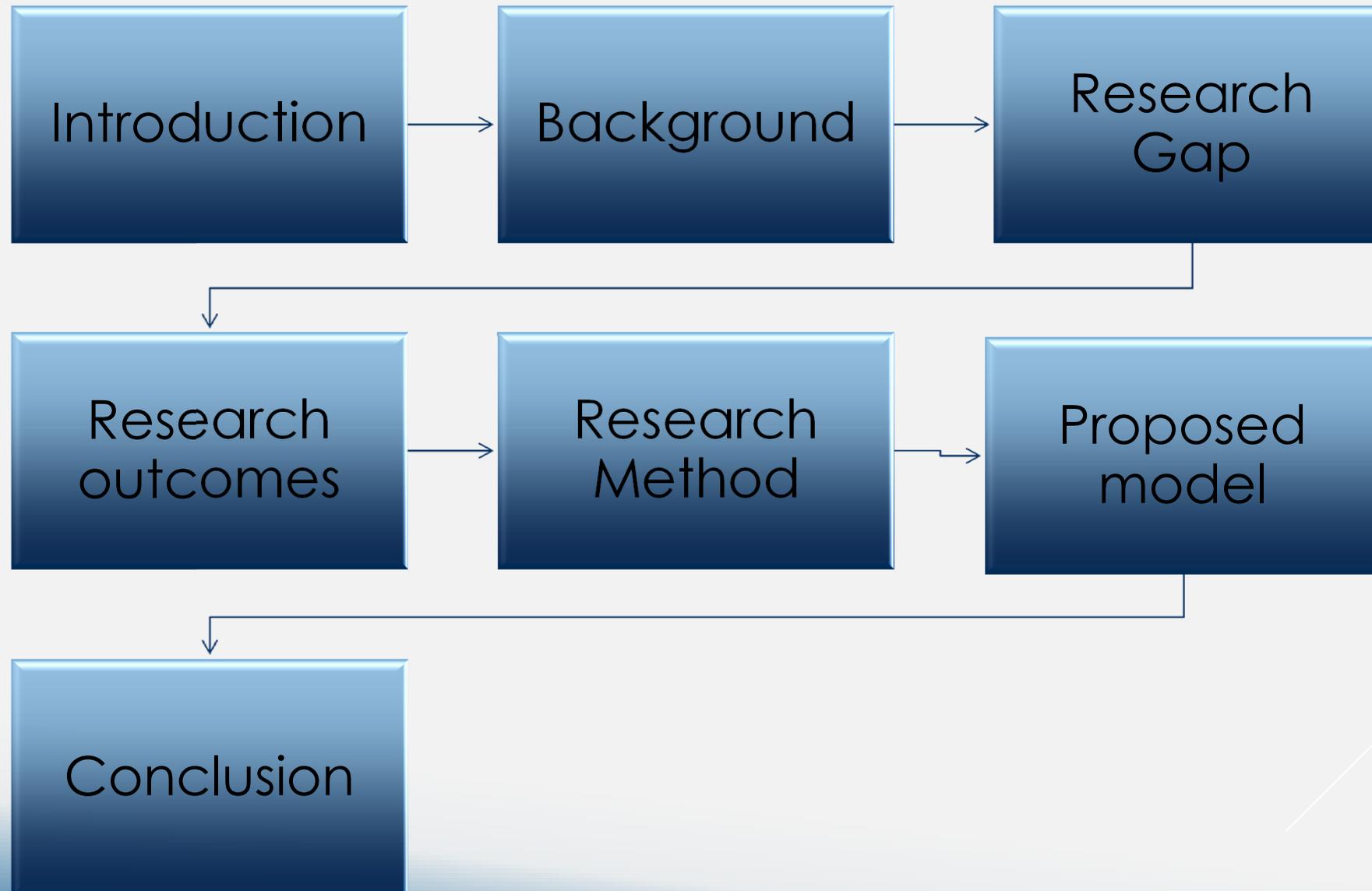
Introduction

- The proliferation of mobile devices in developing nations has given hope to the integration of mobile technology into education practices.

- There is current research on m-learning in developing countries but there is a paucity of empirical research on m-learning in tertiary institutions in emerging economies.

- Research from developing countries has shown positive results for m-learning projects in supporting education in remote locations.

- This study aims to develop a m-learning model for Zimbabwe's tertiary institutions.

3

Background
M-learning

- Earlier definitions of m-learning took a techno-centric perspective while this study will focus on learner-centred mobility.

Why M-learning in Zimbabwe?

- The quality of education still faces noteworthy challenges despite significant improvements in educational indicators.

- Lack of access to quality education is a major impediment to economic growth.

- Tertiary institutions are responsible for producing highly skilled manpower and are therefore central to the development of the country.

M-learning potentials

- Increased access to information, according to Kabanda (2014) the mobile phone density in Zimbabwe is above 100%.

- M-learning enables interaction between learners and lecturers and amongst learners themselves .

- M-learning fosters collaboration opportunities for learners and there is evidence that collaboration produces a better understanding of the subject matter (Parsons, Ryu, and Cranshaw 2006).

M-learning potentials

- Learners can personalise how, when and where they will learn.

- Learners have access to a variety of resources and communities that share the same interests even in different locations, which produces a dynamic educational experience (Crescente and Lee 2011).

- Most learners own mobile technologies and use them regularly in their personal lives and would most likely use these same devices to personalise their education and make it more engaging.

6

M-learning challenges

- Inadequate infrastructure (unreliable electricity supplies and low quality Internet connectivity).

- High initial investment costs (equipment, connectivity, technical support, training and maintenance).

- Educational policies that restrict the use of mobile devices for learning in developing countries.

- Technological constraints (size of device, multiple standards, numerous operating systems, and low battery life).

7

Research gap

- An analysis of m-learning frameworks carried out shows various combinations of aspects which influence m-learning implementation.

- There is need to conduct research which includes key aspects to examine how they collectively influence m-learning implementation as per the proposed conceptual model.

- Existing m-learning frameworks cannot be adopted as there are gaps in these conceptual models, making them inadequate for implementation in the Zimbabwean context with respect to:

  - Factors influencing m-learning adoption
  - Challenges to m-learning
  - M-learning characteristics
  - Pedagogy

8

Research Outcomes

Theoretical Significance

- This study aims to contribute to theoretical knowledge about various aspects underlying the successful implementation of m-learning in the mainstream higher education context of Zimbabwe.

- This study will make a theoretical contribution by showing how different aspects of the proposed conceptual model interact and how these aspects influence m-learning implementation.

- Students, researchers and academics will be able to use this model as a reference in related future studies.

Practical Significance

- The research aims to introduce an m-learning model for tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe.

- It is anticipated that the m-learning model will encourage m-learning implementation and adoption in Zimbabwe tertiary institutions.

- The m-learning model will provide guidelines for instructional designers and lecturers when designing m-learning activities and blending these with existing teaching and learning practices.

10

Research Method

- The mixed-methods approach will be employed for this study.

❑ Mixed methods approach has been lauded for producing a complete picture that adds rigour, richness, breadth, complexity and depth to an investigation (Denscombe, 2008; Flick, 2009).

❑ Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala (2013) suggest that Information Systems researchers should use mixed methods approach with the intention to provide a holistic understanding of a phenomenon for which the extant research is fragmented, inconclusive and equivocal.

❑ Complementarity, mixed-methods approach seek elaboration and clarification from one method with results from the other method (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989)

11

Research Method

- The study will follow an exploratory design because of the scant previous research on m-learning in tertiary education in Zimbabwe.

- The qualitative research will involve focus group interviews and in-depth interviews.

12

Qualitative Research

Focus Groups

- Focus groups will be used to draw upon the learners' attitudes, experiences, beliefs and reactions which are not feasible using other methods thereby gaining insights into the participants' shared understanding of m-learning in the Zimbabwean context.

13

Qualitative Research

In-depth Interviews

- In-depth interviews will be used to collect data from the lecturers, library staff, administrative staff, university IT staff, mobile service providers, ministries of higher education, and ICT personnel.

- In-depth interviews provide opportunities to understand reasons for decisions made by participants, as well as reasons for opinions and attitudes, and give the researcher an opportunity to probe answers which add to the significance of data.

14

Proposed Model
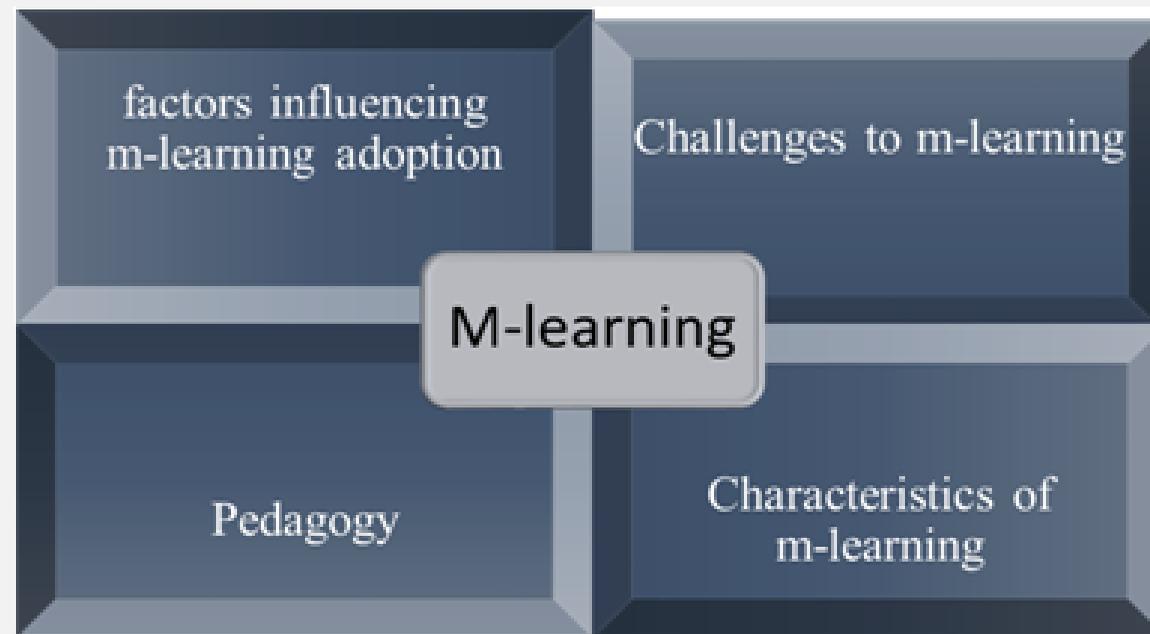
Conclusion

- There is a scarcity of empirical research on m-learning for tertiary institutions from developing countries.

- M-learning adoption and implementation by universities is technically complex given that the learning involves students, instructors, content and institutions.

16

Conclusion

- In developing countries the implementation of m-learning is a complex process, made increasingly so by considerations of infrastructure and culture.

- It is anticipated that the proposed model will capture the various aspects of m-learning in the context of a developing country.

17

Thank you