

Handbook of Mobile Learning

From MXIT to Dr Math

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Abstract

In 2007, Laurie Butgereit, a researcher at the CSIR Meraka Institute, started to use Mxit as a communication channel to tutor her son in mathematics. Her son and a number of his friends logged in, and Dr Math was born. At the inception of Dr Math, Mxit freely communicated with numerous Jabber servers around the world. Butgereit (2011a) simply created a chat account (<http://jabber.org>) using an open-source chat client, such as Gaim or Pidgin, and, within minutes, the author was chatting to the handful of high school friends about their mathematics homework. Mxit is one of South Africa's largest social-networking platforms and currently has over 50 million users registered (Mxit, 2012). The original concept for Mxit started in 2000, with research into a massively multiplayer mobile game. The original game was SMS based and, alas, because of the high cost of SMS, the original game was not successful. With the advent of cheaper Internet connectivity over cell phones, such as general packet radio service (GPRS), however, this mobile game was successfully transformed into a mobile instant-messaging service (Knott-Craig and Silber, 2012). The popularity is partly due to the cost-effective solution it provides to Web-enabled phone users to participate in a social network, either free or at a marginal cost, depending on the network used. This has enabled Dr Math to provide the service free, or virtually free, to the learner as end user.