**“iPad: Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age”**

An iPad is a tablet computer designed and developed by Apple and launched in April 2010. It is particularly marketed as a platform for audio and visual media such as e-books, e-newspapers, movies, music, games, and a wide range of applications. The main features include mail, web browser, photos, videos, YouTube, iPod, maps, contacts, calendar, notes and application store. Current limitations of this first device include the lack of a camera, USB port, Adobe Flash support, multi-tasking capabilities, SD memory slot, only 64GB internal storage (tiny for “terabyte days”), and the fact that it is not a standalone device, depending on a PC/Mac to install updates via the iTunes interface.

Productivity applications like DocToGo, Keynote, Papers, iAnnotate, Good Reader, and upcoming applications available through the iTunes store will have a positive impact in teaching and learning scenarios. For academics it may transform their practices allowing them ubiquitous work, paperless offices, new teaching tool in the classroom, promoting of discipline innovation, motivating students in the use of technology, improving research collaboration and productivity, and enhancing conference attendance. From the student’s side, key features to be considered include: e-books, note taking, impact on studying and reviewing, increasing student interest level (motivation), and individualisation of curriculum.

E-books may reduce the cost of education but the most important feature is that it integrates book content (book + audio + video + animation). Before the iPad, a book was a concept that has not changed in 500 years, but now an evolution has taken place. The advantage of this evolution is obvious, books will be downloaded straight into the device and frequently content update will be expected. This will reduce costs, it will save trees and ink and there is a potential that the iPad may render printed textbooks obsolete.

An interesting impact will be observed in note taking. Students will not lose their notes,

no handwriting so notes will be legible making possible sharing them with other students via email or Bluetooth file transfer.

Paperless classrooms are possible now. There is no need for a recycling paper program and the teacher can e-mail worksheets such as practice sheets, laboratory directions, quizzes and tests directly to students. Students can digitally submit their assignments and academics will not carry several kilos of papers between home and schools. Additionally, iPads in conjunction with polling software has the potential to assess a student’s understanding of a topic and provide feedback within minutes (e.g eClicker application). This system will make classrooms more interactive and engaging and may have a positive effect on drop-out rates.

In studying and reviewing, the iPad will make this task easy, as all information in terms of notes, articles, and books will be organised on the device. This will make studying to be more ubiquitous than ever. The iPad could provide students with the chance to take better care of their educational resources.

The iPad may promote individualised curriculum and applications could be developed to customise the learning experience of individual students. Courses could become more independent of a teacher. Students could begin working more or less at their own pace as educators help each student progress individually. In an inclusive educational era, this has an interesting potential.

Some Catholic schools are implementing iPads for their classrooms (e.g. St Aidan’s Primary School in Rooty Hill). New policies at Schools need to be developed to avoid distractions for students with the iPad and its ability to play games.

The ATO has said that the iPad, and equivalent e-readers, or tablets, are deemed to be equivalent to a laptop and it will attract a 50 per cent education rebate. This will make iPads popular with schools.

Competitors are trying to integrate the entertainment features of the iPad with the utility of a laptop, all in a lightweight package device. The tendency for the new tablets is to run Android; a mobile operating system developed by Google. Few examples can be mentioned like Samsung Galaxy Tablet, Google Tablet, Dell Streak, Asus Eee Tablet, Notion Ink Adam, ICD Vega, and many generic tablets coming from China.

In conclusion, taking into account its current features and limitations, the iPad may not be a ‘killer’ device that will displace laptops, but a significant impact in teaching and learning scenarios can be predicted in the following years. Research needs to be conducted to study the iPad’s impact on educational settings in order to develop innovative approaches that will benefit students.

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Quote “Technology is not learning, it only makes our lives easy when we use it efficiently”