Assignment 3

1   Aim

Conduct a contextual inquiry for selected product/system

2   Objective

To interview users of the system in their actual environment while they perform real tasks.

3   Outcome

Students will be able to gather information about the system in detail, understand the nuances of the system, learn what is important to the users and improve the system.

4   Theory

Contextual inquiry is a semi-structured interview method to obtain information about the context of use, where users are first asked a set of standard questions and then observed and questioned while they work in their own environments. Because users are interviewed in their own environments, the analysis data is more realistic than laboratory data. Contextual inquiry is based on a set of principles that allow it to be molded to different situations. This technique is generally used at the beginning of the design process and is good for getting rich information about work practices, the social, technical, and physical environments, and user tools.

The four principles of contextual inquiry are:

- Focus - Plan for the inquiry, based on a clear understanding of your purpose

- Context - Go to the customer's workplace and watch them do their own work

- Partnership - Talk to customers about their work and engage them in uncovering unarticulated aspects of work

- Interpretation - Develop a shared understanding with the customer about the aspects of work that matter

Our discoveries during the process are as follows:

4.1 Observation

As we observed the targeted real-world users of the system, i.e. teachers and their students, we understood more about them. We observed how teachers interact and use their mobile phones, what parts of the application confused them, and what features they wished were added to the system. Teachers were confused by the use of MAC addresses for the bands on the application, and would prefer to use names of students assigned to each band to help them identify the band easily.

On observing the students' use of their bands, we found out that they would also prefer to view information about the people near them, which inspired us to add screens to their devices. As children in unfamiliar situations surrounded by strangers tend to cry as a first response to being lost- in order to ease their woes, we also decided to include a 'Help' button on the band that would inform group members in the band's vicinity that the wearer is in need of help.

4.2 Interview

We prepared a questionnare for students and teachers to try to gauge an understanding of their experience with the system. We understood that while the system's design was functional, teachers would prefer if the design was more attractive and was more intuitive.

4.3 Conducting the enquiry

We used the master-apprentice model, in which the users are the master and we are the apprentive, to understand more about how the teachers managed students on field trips without using our system- from this, we understood how difficult a task it was, and how our system could make the process easier for them.

5 Conclusion

Through this assignment, we have understood what changes could be made and what new design features could be incorporated to make our system better suited for its intended users.